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FAMILIAR LETTERS

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT

VOL. I

"It was a barren scene, and wild,
Where naked cliffs were rudely piled;
But ever and anon between
Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green;
And well the lonely infant knew
Recesses where the wall-flower grew,
And honeysuckle loved to crawl
Up the low crag and ruin'd wall."[1]

Marmion, Canto III.

[1] Smailholm Tower, situated among a cluster of wild rocks about two miles from Dryburgh, was the scene of Sir Walter's infancy.

FAMILIAR LETTERS
OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

VOL I.

The lonely hill, the rocky tower
Which charmed my fancy's wakening hour.

Marmion.

EDINBURGH, DAVID DOUGLAS.
1894.

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PREFACE

When I was requested by the Hon. Mrs. Maxwell Scott to make a selection for publication from the correspondence preserved at Abbotsford, it was intended that the volumes now given to the public should be confined to letters addressed by Sir Walter to members of his own family; but other letters which passed between him and some of his dearest friends having, through the courtesy of their representatives, been placed at my disposal, I felt that they would add greatly to the interest of the work, and many of them have accordingly been introduced.

I have done little more than arrange the correspondence in chronological order, supplying where necessary a slight thread of continuity by annotation and illustration. It need not be said that there is no attempt at a Biography—that has been done once for all; and this selection must therefore be regarded as forming a supplement to the great work of Sir Walter's son-in-law. Indeed, my chief motive for undertaking it was the following paragraph in Mr.

Lockhart's preface to his abridged edition of 1848: —"I should have been more willing to produce an "enlarged edition; for the interest of Sir Walter's "history lies, I think, peculiarly in its minute details "—especially in the details set down by himself in "his letters and diaries; and of course after the "lapse of ten years more copious use might be made "of those materials without offence or indecorum."

The period covered by the present volumes is from 1797, the year of Sir Walter's marriage, to 1825, when he commenced his Journal.

All the letters are believed to be printed now for the first time, except where otherwise stated.

I am deeply indebted to the Lady Napier and Ettrick for her permission to print the very interesting series of letters addressed to her aunt, the Marchioness of Abercorn: to the Duke of Buccleuch for the Buccleuch and Montagu letters; and to the venerable Mr. W. H. Baillie for those addressed to his aunt, Joanna Baillie.

My thanks are also due to Mrs. Morritt for letters from Rokeby; to Miss Richardson for the use of the letters to her father; to the Senatus of the University of Edinburgh for access to the MSS. in their library; to Miss Maria Skene for the use of her grandfather's "Reminiscences"; and to many other friends who have willingly given me their assistance.

The portrait is taken from Chantrey's bust, now at Abbotsford, which according to Lockhart "alone preserves for posterity the cast of expression most fondly remembered by all who ever mingled in his domestic circle." This has been engraved at the suggestion of Sir George Reid, who has also contributed the two vignettes, which are from drawings specially made by him on the spot.

D. D.

Edinburgh, 22 Drummond Place,
October 7, 1893.

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Facsimile Plan of Abbotsford in 1811,—End of Vol.

LETTERS

CHAPTER I

1797-1804

EDINBURGH AND LASSWADE

"There's no illusion there; these flowers,
That wailing brook, these lovely bowers,
Are, Lucy, all our own.
And, since thine Arthur called thee wife,
Such seems the prospect of his life,
A lovely path on-winding still
By gurgling brook and sloping hill.
'Tis true that mortals cannot tell
What waits them in the distant dell;
But be it hap, or be it harm,
We tread the pathway arm in arm."

Bridal of Triermain.

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1771—1804

Walter Scott born 15th August 1771.

Called to the bar 11th July 1792.

Translations from the German—*The Chase*, *William and Helen*, 4to, Edin. Published 1796.

Marriage 24th Dec. 1797, and residence in 50 George Street; 10 Castle Street, 1798.

Lasswade Cottage taken, 1798.

Song of the Edinburgh Light Dragoons, composed 1798.

Translation of *Goetz von Berlichingen*, 8vo, London, 1799.

Visit to London, March 1799.

Father died, April 1799. Daughter Sophia born Oct. 24, 1799.

First visit to Bothwell Castle, autumn 1799.

Appointed Sheriff of Selkirk, 16th Dec. 1799.

Ballads—*Glenfinlas*, *Eve of St. John*, *Grey Brother*, *Fire King*, 1799-1800.

Sister Anne died 1801.

Son Walter born Oct. 28, 1801.

Border Minstrelsy in preparation.

Christmas at Hamilton Palace, 1801.

Border Minstrelsy, vols. i. and ii. printed at Kelso, and published by Cadell & Davies, London, January 1802.

Removes from No. 10 to No. 39 Castle Street, Edinburgh, May 1802.

Ballad of *Cadyow Castle*.

Visits the Border in company with Leyden, autumn 1802.

Daughter Anne born Feb. 2, 1803.

Leyden's departure for India, 1803.

Visits London and Oxford, April 1803.

Border Minstrelsy, vol. iii. published May 1803.

Wordsworth's visit to Scott at Lasswade, Sept. 1803.

Contributions to *Edinburgh Review*—

Amadis de Gaul, *Sibbald's Chronicle of Scottish Poetry* } in No. 5, Oct. 1803.

Godwin's Chaucer in No 6, Jan. 1804.

Ellis' Early English Poetry, *Chatterton* } in No. 7, April 1804.

Sir Tristrem, published by Constable on 2d May 1804.

Removes from Lasswade to Ashestiel, May 1804.

Tom Purdie engaged as overseer.

Bequest of Rosebank, Kelso, June 1804.

FAMILIAR LETTERS

CHAPTER I.

TO MISS CARPENTER.[1]

[About *September* 1797.]

Since Miss Carpenter has forbid my seeing her for the present, I am willing to incur even the hazard of her displeasure by intruding upon her in this manner. My anxiety, which is greater than I can find words to express, leads me to risque what I am sure if you could but know my present [condition] would not make you very, very angry.

Gladly would I have come to Carlisle to-morrow, and returned here to dinner; but dearly as I love my friend, I would ever sacrifice my own personal gratification to follow the line of conduct which is most agreeable to her. I likewise wish to enter more particularly into the circumstances of my situation, which I should most heartily despise myself were I capable of concealing or misrepre-

[1] Miss Charlotte Carpenter (daughter of Jean Charpentier of Lyons and Charlotte Volere), who three months later became Scott's wife. This letter precedes those from the lady printed by Mr. Lockhart. Scott's conscientious regard for truth did not permit him to conceal what he might in the circumstances have been pardoned for withholding, viz. : that he had recently been so deeply in love with another as to be heart-broken. We have, however, his own confession, made in December 1825, that his heart had been "handsomely pieced" again by this happy marriage, though "the crack would remain till his dying day."

See letter to his mother in *Life*, vol. i. pp. 370-372.

senting to you. Being only the second brother of a large family, you will easily conceive that tho' my father is a man in easy circumstances, my success in life must depend upon my own exertions. This I have been always taught to expect, and far from considering it as a hardship, my feelings on that subject have ever been those of confidence in myself.

Hitherto, from reasons which have long thrown a lassitude over my mind, to which it is not naturally liable, my professional exertions have been culpably neglected; and as I reside with my father, I gave myself little trouble, provided my private income did but answer my personal expense and the maintenance of a horse or two. At the same time, none of those who were called to the Bar with myself can boast of having very far outstripped me in the career of life or of business.

I have every reason to expect that the Sheriffdom of a particular County,[1] presently occupied by a gentleman in a very precarious state of health, may soon fall to my lot. The salary is £250 per annum, and the duty does not interfere with the exercise of my profession, but greatly advances it. The only gentleman who can be entitled to dispute the situation with me is at present Colonel of a Regiment of Dragoons, an office which he will not readily quit for that of a provincial Judge. Many other little resources, which I cannot easily explain so as to make you comprehend me, induce me to express myself with confidence upon the probability of my success; and oh, how dear these prospects will become to me would my beloved friend but permit me to think that she would share them!

If you could form any idea of the society in Edinburgh, I am sure the prospect of living there would not terrify you. Your situation would entitle you to take as

[1] The Sheriffdom of Selkirk, which Scott obtained in 1799.

great a share in the amusements of the place as you were disposed to; and when you were tired of these, it should be the study of my life to prevent your feeling one moment's *Ennui*. When care comes, we will laugh it away; or if the load is too heavy, we will sit down and share it between us, till it becomes almost as light as pleasure itself. You are apprehensive of losing your liberty; but could you but think with how many domestic pleasures the sacrifice will be repaid, you would no longer think it very frightful. Indisposition may deprive you of that liberty which you prize so highly, and age certainly will. O, think how much happier you will find yourself, surrounded by friends who will love you, than with those who will only regard even my beloved Charlotte while she possesses the power of interesting or entertaining them.

You seem, too, to doubt the strength, or at least the stability of my affection; I can only protest to you most solemnly that a truer never warmed a mortal's breast, and that though it may appear sudden it is not rashly adopted. You yourself must allow that from the nature of our acquaintance, we are entitled to judge more absolutely of each other, than from a much longer one trammelled with the usual forms of life; and tho' I have been repeatedly in similar situations with amiable and accomplished women, the feelings I entertain for you have ever been strangers to my bosom, except during a period I have often alluded to.

I have settled in my mind to see you on Monday next. I stay thus long to give you time to make what inquiries you may think proper, and also because you seemed to wish it. All Westmoreland and Cumberland shall not detain me a minute longer. In the meanwhile I do not expect you to write. You shall do nothing to commit yourself. How this week will pass away I know not; but a more restless, anxious being never numbered the hours than I have been this whole day. Do not think of bidding

me *forget you*, when we again meet—O do not; the thing is really impossible, as impossible as it is to express how much I love you, and how truly I believe our hearts were formed for each other. Mr. and Mrs. B[ird][1] are hospitality itself, but all will not do. I would fain make you laugh before concluding, but my heart is rather too full for trifling. Adieu, adieu, souvenez-vous de moi.

W. SCOTT.

TO THE SAME.

[*Nov.*]

AND did my Love really think I had forgot her, or was going to turn a negligent Correspondent, at the very time when I would give the world to be with her, and tell her every hour how much I love her? And why do you think I should regret leaving Carlisle, if it were not because I leave my Charlotte behind me? If you were out of that ancient and illustrious city, I am sure I should think it one of the dullest holes that ever *Ennui* set up her throne in, and far from regretting my departure, I should certainly not care a farthing if I was told at the same time I should never see it more.

That you should be melancholy, my sweet friend, at contemplating your approaching change of state is not surprising; but I am glad you promise not to give way to such feelings, and that your *gaieté de cœur* is returning. If it will help to banish *Tristesse*, let me again assure you that every thought of my heart shall be directed to ensure your happiness. I admire of all things your laughing Philosophy, and shall certainly be your pupil in learning to take a gay view of human life. *On s'ennuie d'être triste—n'est-ce pas?*

I suppose by this time you have the few lines which I wrote from Ashestiel, and which my sister filled up. The place is seven miles distant from the Post Town, which

[1] Friends of Miss Carpenter. The Rev. John Bird was a minor canon of St. Mary's, Carlisle.

prevents them from having regular opportunities of sending off letters.

Is it not very strange that I should never have an answer from Mr. Bird? I really begin to be surprised. He may perhaps have directed to Hardesty's, tho' even then they would have had the sense to forward the letter to me.

We are getting a household servant with a very excellent character. She has been a long time in two very genteel families, and understands marketing, etc., and can set down a decent dinner or supper; not however when there is nothing in the house. I am likewise buying such things as are necessary for us. My mother is to give us some linen and buy us some more; and, in short, we are endeavouring to put matters in train. . . .

TO THE SAME.

22nd November 1797.

In consequence of your letter, my dearest friend, I shall by to-morrow's post transmit to Lord Downshire a scroll of a Contract of Marriage, for his inspection and approbation, settling upon my sweet Charlotte as well what is her own already as what her Brother may be pleased to endow her with,—a very slender piece of justice on my part. Alas, my Love, it is all I can at present do for you; but I hope better days will come, when I shall be able to repay you for your disinterested attachment to your poor friend, *poor* indeed in everything but his attachment to you and your love to him.

Lord Downshire, when the paper is revised, must return it for your signature and mine, after which there will be no obstacle to our immediate marriage, and I shall endeavour to banish every disagreeable idea as it rises in my gentle Charlotte's bosom. In less than a month, if this paper is returned, you *must* be mine, for I know you are

above desiring any causeless delay of what is so very necessary to my happiness, and give me leave to say, to your comfort, for I am sure you must be tired of the *noblesse* of Carlisle.

I heard to-day from Mr. Bird—a very polite letter, and arrived just at the time that my Highland blood began to boil over. I am no longer surprised at his silence. He had written me when I was in Edinburgh, which I had answered, and sent him a small pamphlet, the receipt of which, to be sure, he never acknowledged, for it happened the bearer had failed to deliver it till the other day; so I suppose we were mutually accusing each other of very ill-breeding.

He has given me a commission to get a *seal* engraved for him in a particular way;[1] now, if I can get (being, as you are pleased to acknowledge, a man of Taste) something very uncommon and handsome, don't you think it would be a more genteel compliment than offering him money for making me the happiest man in the world? Ask Miss Nicholson.[2] I am most happy you are pleased with the ring, and still more that she is so, because she is a more impartial judge of my Taste. In one instance I am sure it will be acknowledged by the whole world, tho' I fear the same instance will throw some imputation upon that of my *petite amie*. I had a visit from Mr. Haliburton to-day, and asked him all about your Brother, who was two years in his house. My father is Mr. Haliburton's relation and Chief, as he represents a very old family of that name.

When you go to the South of Scotland with me, you will see their burying-place, now all that remains with my

[1] The seal here spoken of was presented by Scott to Mr. Bird. It is now the property of Mr. Dobinson, Stanwix, Carlisle. It is a Scotch crystal nearly an inch in breadth, set in open gold-work. The figure of a falcon with wings expanded is engraved on the stone, with some Persian characters which may be read as "John Bird."

[2] Miss Carpenter's companion at Gilsland, a daughter of the Dean of Exeter.

father of a very handsome property. It is one of the most beautiful and romantic scenes you ever saw, among the ruins of an old abbey. When I die, Charlotte, you must cause my bones to be laid there; but we shall have many happy days before that, I hope.[1] Farewell, my dear, *dear* Charlotte.

TO P. MURRAY.[2]

Decr 1797.

Anticipated
Gazette Extraordinary,
xxii[d] *December* 1797.

Yesterday was married at Carlisle Walter Scott Esq[r] Advocate to Miss Margaret Charlotte Carpenter, daughter to John Carpenter, late of the city of Lyons, Esq[r].

Annotations upon the Gazette Extraordinary.

21*st Dec*[r].—We hear from Edinburgh that the celebrated Counsellor Scott of that city set out this day for Carlisle to show cause to the Bishop of that city why a license should be granted to solemnize the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony.

We hear from Carlisle that the Miss Carpenter whose name *is* to appear in the Gazette Extr[y] shortly to be

[1] Miss Carpenter, who had not much of the spirit of romance, replies (November 27, 1797):—

"What an idea of yours was that to mention where you wish to have your *bones laid*! If you were married I should think you were tired of me. A very pretty compliment *before marriage*! I hope sincerely I shall not live to see that day. If you always have those cheerful thoughts, how very pleasant and gay you must be! Adieu, my dearest friend. Take care of yourself if you love me, as I have no *wish* that you should *visit* that *beautiful* and *romantic* scene, the burying-place. Adieu once more, and believe that you are loved very sincerely by C. C."

See *Life*, vol. i. pp. 388-9.

[2] Patrick Murray of Simprim. This early friend and correspondent of Scott—endeared to him by kindred tastes—was a son of Lord Elibank; he is frequently referred to in the *Life*.—See *Journal*, vol. i. 135. Mr. Murray was at the date of this letter Captain in the "Perthshire Cavalry," then stationed at Penrith.

published is no relation whatever to the Indian Chief called the little Carpenter, late Sachem of the Shawanese, but that she was born in the south of France, and was a ward of the present Lord Downshire.

21*st Dec*r.—As the public curiosity has been so much excited about Miss Carpenter, it may be proper to say that this *fortunate* young lady is, in the opinion of the whole world, the delight of the male sex, and the envy of her own.

In a word, I am tired of my newspaper mode of communication. I am, I am, my dear Murray—how shall I say it?—I am to be married to-morrow or next day at farthest. Of this, my intended deed of desperation, you should not have remained so long ignorant had I known how to address you. You may perhaps have remarked Miss C. at a Carlisle ball, but more likely not, as her figure is not very *frappant*. A smart-looking little girl with dark brown hair, would probably be her portrait if drawn by an indifferent hand.[1] But I, you may believe, should make a piece of work of my sketch, as little like the original as Hercules to me. We shall have enough to live upon without being independent of my profession, which you may believe I shall now cultivate with double assiduity.[2] As from being a sorner[3] I am becoming a sornee, it is proper to acquaint you that my dwelling is No. 50 George Street,

[1] Mr. Lockhart's description of Mrs. Scott, on the authority of those who saw her in her early married years, may be given here:—

"Without the features of a regular beauty, she was rich in personal attractions; 'a form that was fashioned as light as a fay's'; a complexion of the clearest and lightest olive; eyes large, deep set and dazzling, of the finest Italian brown; and a profusion of silken tresses, black as the raven's wing; her address hovering between the reserve of a pretty young English-woman who has not mingled largely in general society, and a certain natural archness and gaiety that suited well with the accompaniment of a French accent."

[2] The marriage took place in St. Mary's Church, Carlisle, on December 24, 1797.

[3] *Sorner*, one who takes free quarters.

where I hope you will, upon your first coming to town, retaliate some of the hundred visitations with which I have favoured you. Our corps comes merrily on, and makes a good appearance. I would march to-morrow,—mark me, even to-morrow, with all earthly pleasure to cut *One* and *Two* at the "Army of England."[1] Success to the English Army, and D—n to the Army of England. Hurrah!—
Ever yours, WALTER SCOTT.

TO THE SAME.

EDIN^R, 30*th June* 1799.

MY DEAR MURRAY,—. . . I cannot tell you how happy I should be to make the little tour you propose, and in your company; but to tell you a Benedick kind of truth, I cannot just at present part from the little lady you saw at Newcastle. We were unfortunate in losing our first child,[2] and you must be married yourself before you can conceive in the slightest degree the interest which one takes in an event which is likely to perpetuate his memory, *tel qui soit.* We go in next month to our little cottage near Lasswade, to rest there for the four months' vacation, unless perhaps a little trip to Tweedside may vary our plans. . . .—Believe me, ever yours most faithfully,
WALTER SCOTT.

Address—Castle Street, Edin^r.

TO WILLIAM LAIDLAW.[3]

EDIN^R, 12*th May* 1802.

SIR,—In order to testify as much as possible my sense of your politeness in relation to the objects of my pursuit,

[1] The forces raised by the French Directory for the invasion of Britain were thus named. The same term was applied to Bonaparte's army of invasion in 1803.

[2] A boy, born in October 1798.

[3] The first letter I find addressed to the author of *Lucy's Flittin'*. For an account of this devoted friend of Scott see *Life* throughout, and the *Journal*. After Scott's death Laidlaw became factor to Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth, and afterwards to Sir Charles Ross of Balnagowan, Ross-shire; he died in 1845.

I have to request your acceptance of two volumes of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, which I hope may afford you some amusement. I beg you will keep on the look out for any old stories may fall in your way, whether in rhyme or otherwise, and preserve a memorandum of them against I come to the country. I hope you will not forget your promise to let me see you when you come to town.—Your obedient servant, WALTER SCOTT.

FROM JAMES HOGG.[1]

ETTRICK HOUSE, *June* 30, 1802.

DEAR SIR,—I have been perusing your Minstrelsy very diligently for a while past, and it being the first book I ever perused which was written by a person I had seen and conversed with, the consequence hath been to me a most sensible pleasure; for in fact it is the remarks and modern pieces that I have delighted most in, being as it were personally acquainted with many of the antient pieces formerly.

My mother is actually a living miscellany of old songs. I never believed that she had half so many until I came to a trial. There are none in your collection of which she hath not a part, and I should by this time have had a great number written for your amusement,—thinking them

[1] Few of Scott's own letters in those early years have been recovered, though he corresponded with many friends whose replies he carefully preserved, and all of which are now at Abbotsford. *None* of the many letters written to Hogg or Campbell are forthcoming, but the reader may be interested in seeing some of the replies so carefully treasured by Scott. This very remarkable letter, printed from the original MS., is the first written to Scott by Hogg, and readers ought to remember that "this true son of nature and genius," then hardly conscious of his powers, "had taught himself to write by copying the letters of a printed book as he lay watching his flock on the hillside." Hogg had been asked by Laidlaw to help him in obtaining materials for the *Minstrelsy*; and they had met Scott in the previous summer on the braes of Yarrow,—the meeting so amusingly described by the Ettrick Shepherd in his *Domestic Manners*, 12mo, Glasgow, 1838.

all of great antiquity and lost to posterity—had I not luckily lighted upon a collection of songs, in two volumes, published by I know not who, in which I recognised about half a score of my mother's best songs almost word for word. No doubt I was piqued, but it saved me much trouble, paper, and ink; for I am carefully avoiding everything which I have seen or heard of being in print, although I have no doubt that I shall err, being acquainted with almost no collections of that sort; but I am not afraid that you too will mistake. I am still at a loss with respect to some. [Then follows a list of Ballads and Songs.]

Suspend your curiosity, Mr. Scott. You will see them when I see you, of which I am as impatient as you can be to see the songs for your life. But as I suppose you have no personal acquaintance in this parish, it would be presumption in me to expect that you will visit my cottage, but I will attend you in any part of the Forest if you will send me word. I am far from supposing that a person of your discernment—d—n it, I 'll blot out that word, 'tis so like flattery—I say I don't think that you would despise a shepherd's "humble cot an' hamely fare" as Burns hath it; yet though I would be extremely proud of the visit, hang me if I would know what I would do w' ye. I am surprised to find that the songs in your collection differ so widely from my mother's. . . .

Many indeed are not aware of the manners of this place; it is but lately emerged from barbarity, and till this present age the poor illiterate people in these glens knew of no other entertainment in the long winter nights than in repeating and listening to those feats of their ancestors which I believe to be handed down inviolate from father to son for many generations, although no doubt, had a copy been taken of them at the end of every fifty years, there must have been some difference which the

repeaters would have insensibly have fallen into, merely by the change of terms in that period. I believe it is thus that many very antient songs have been modernised, which yet to a connoisseur will bear visible marks of antiquity. The Maitlen [the Auld Maitland of the Border Minstrelsy], exclusive of its mode of description, is all composed of words which would, mostly every one, both spell and pronounce in the very same dialect that was spoken some centuries ago.

I formed a project of collecting all the tenors of the tunes to which these old songs were sung, and having them set to music . . .; but I find it impossible. I might compose kind of tunes to some of them, and adapt others, but can in no wise learn the original ones. I find it was only the subject-matter which the old people concerned themselves about; and any kind of tunes that they had, they always make one to serve a great many songs.

My uncle hath never had any tune whatsoever saving that which he saith his prayer to: and my mother's is quite gone, by reason of age and frailty, and they have had a strong struggle with the world ever since I was born, in all which time, having seldom or never repeated many of the songs, her memory of them is much impaired. My uncle, said I! He is, Mr. Scott, the most incorrigible man alive. I cannot help telling you this: he came one night professedly to see me and crack with me, as he said. Thinking this a fair opportunity I treated him with the best the house could afford, gave him a hearty glass, and to humour him, talked a little of religion. Thus I set him on, but good L—d, had you heard him, it was impossible to get him off again. In the course of his remarks he had occasion to cite Ralph Erskine. Sundry times he'd run to the dale[1] where the books lay, get the sermons and read near every one of them from which

[1] Deal or wooden shelf.

he had a citation. What a deluge was poured on me of errors, sins, lusts, covenants broken, burned and buried, legal teachers, patronage, and what not! In short, my dram was lost to my purpose. The mentioning a song put him in a passion.[1] . . .

Pardon, my dear Sir, the freedom I have taken in addressing you,—it is my nature, and I could not resist the impulse of writing to you any longer. Let me hear from you as soon as this comes to your hand, and tell me when you will be in Ettrick Forest, and suffer me to subscribe myself, Sir, your most humble and affectionate servant,

JAMES HOGG.

TO MISS SEWARD.[2]

EDIN^R, *30th November* 1802.

. . . BOTH Miss Seward's favours arrived safe, and I have been forming the resolution of answering them to-morrow for certain for several weeks. But my country amusements and journeys were succeeded by the necessity of attending to some family affairs, and besides, I can plead with too much justice the feeling apology of the sturdy Neapolitan *lazarone*, to a person who urged him to work, "My dear friend, did you but know how lazy I am"—a disease for which no Pharmacopœia, I believe, affords a remedy, unless the sharp stimulus of absolute necessity. Since I had the pleasure of hearing from you, I have disposed of the property of the *Border Minstrelsy* for £500; and I only mention this circumstance that you may hold me acquitted of the vile vanity of wishing to hold myself forth as one

[1] Hogg's relation was Will Laidlaw of Phawhope, of whom Scott wrote that "one of our best reciters has turned religious in his later days, and finds out that old songs are unlawful."

[2] Anna Seward of Lichfield, to whose care we are indebted for the preservation of many of Scott's early letters, was much respected by Scott, and notwithstanding her long letters and her affectations in style, she interested and amused him. She was then looked upon as a literary authority, and even now her published letters may be read with pleasure and profit.

despising to reap any profit from his literary pursuits, which I should hold to be ineffable conceit and folly in a man much richer than myself. The mode of publishing by subscription is one which in itself can carry nothing degrading, and which in many of the more extensive and high-priced publications, is perhaps essentially necessary. Still, however, it is asking the public to become bound to pay for what they have not seen, and carries with it, if not the reality, at least the appearance of personal solicitation and personal obligation. And yet our most brilliant authors have had recourse to it, and alas! too often from circumstances of necessity disgraceful to the age in which they lived, and which perhaps may hereafter be distinguished more by the honour of having produced them, than by any other attribute. As for Mackenzie,[1] he was only a subscriber to my third volume in the same way in which Miss Seward is,—by contributing to its contents, not to its sale. I mean not *directly* to the sale, for I know how valuable the contributions of my friends have proved to me in securing the benevolence of the public, and have often likened myself to a General, who, though neither the bravest nor most skilful soldier in the army, runs away with all the profit and half the applause acquired by the prowess of those who have fought under his banners. I am highly flattered by your approbation of *Cadyow Castle*, which is founded upon a fact in Scottish history, for which I refer you to the death of the Regent Murray as narrated in Robertson's *History* at the end of the first volume, where you will find the story told in a manner highly picturesque.

Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh, by whom he was slain, had received the most poignant injury at his hands: his dwelling of Woodhouselee having been plundered by the Regent's minions, and his wife, a few days after child-

[1] Colin Mackenzie of Portmore's contribution to the *Minstrelsy* was his own composition of "Ellandonan Castle."

birth, having been turned naked into the fields when covered with snow, in consequence of which barbarous usage she went raving mad, and died shortly after. She is the Margaret of the Ballad.

I rejoice that you have met the ladies of Llangollen,[1] of whom I have heard so much that I think you must have found them kindred spirits. My friends Mr. and Mrs. Dugald Stewart are well acquainted with them, and great admirers of their accomplishments and manners, a eulogium which conveys a great deal to all who know Mr. and Mrs. Stewart. As I hope you read the Bible, and are acquainted with the propriety of heaping coals of fire upon the head of a lazy correspondent, I venture in virtue of that precept to solicit the pleasure of hearing from you when you can spare me an hour for so idle a purpose.

I am at present busy with the second edition of the *Minstrelsy*, and preparations for the third volume, particularly a sort of Romance of Border Chivalry and Enchantment,[2] which will extend to some length. When it has made any progress, I will send you a few stanzas, which, unworthy as they are, will I hope serve as a sort of peace-offering.

TO CHARLES CARPENTER.[3]

EDINBURGH, *6th March* 1803.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,—. . . I know that good news from Scotland will have considerable effect in enlivening your spirits, and therefore I hasten to tell you that we are

[1] The ladies of Llangollen were Miss Sarah Ponsonby and Lady Eleanor Butler, of the Bessborough and Ormonde families. They had left their homes in Ireland in romantic circumstances, and settled in Wales about 1776. These close friends lived in their picturesque cottage there for more than fifty years. Scott, in a letter to Morritt, gives an amusing description of their adventures, and Mr. Lockhart an equally entertaining account of the ladies in their old age, when Scott and he visited them in 1825. —See *Quarterly Review*, vol. cxvi. p. 472.

[2] *Lay of Last Minstrel.*

[3] Mrs. Scott's brother, Commercial Resident, Salem, India.

well, happy and prosperous. Charlotte, about four weeks ago, presented me with a little damsel whom we have called Anne, in compliment to my worthy mother: had it proved a boy it was to have been a little Charles. Sophia is a thriving little Scotch girl, and the boy uncommonly stout, healthy, and robust; in short, quite a model for a little Hercules.

My worldly matters jog on very well. Government propose to increase the appointments of the sheriffs, which will put an additional £100 into my pocket. Moreover, I have contrived to turn a very slender portion of literary talents to some account by a publication of the poetical antiquities of the Border Counties, where the old people had preserved many ballads and ancient songs descriptive of the manners of the country during the wars with England. . . . I am seeking a mode of conveyance to transmit to you this precious compilation.

You will hear a good deal of our motions from a Doctor Leyden[1] who goes to Madras in this fleet. Should his fortune throw him in your way, Charlotte has given him a few lines to you merely as an introduction, but I must let you a little deeper into his history. He was the son of a very petty farmer in Roxburghshire, and had so little education that at 12 years old he did not know how to write. Nature, however, had been liberal in her gifts; he caught a taste for knowledge, and under the most depressing circumstances made himself master of most of the learned languages of Modern Europe, and even dabbled in Eastern literature. When he found his way to Edinburgh College, his merit by degrees became noticed, and at length

[1] This extraordinary genius, whose name often occurs in these letters, died in his 36th year, on the expedition to Java in 1811. So great was his reputation as an Orientalist at this time that on hearing the sad news, Southey exclaimed that Batavia had been too dearly purchased by his life. Scott wrote a short memoir of his friend, which may be read in the *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. iv. p. 137.

conspicuous. I had the good luck early to discover both his literary and personal worth, and at different times he lived a good deal with us, till it was in my power to procure him his present appointment of Assistant Surgeon on the Madras establishment, which I accomplished through Mr. Dundas. Lord W. Bentinck is to countenance him in his labours, which I suppose will be rather literary than medical. He will certainly make an effort to see you if it be possible. You must be prepared to encounter and pardon some peculiarity of manner, arising from his early history, and which even his intercourse with the first people here and in London has not erased; but you will find this amply atoned for by a great fund of knowledge and native kindness of disposition. He will be able to tell you a thousand little anecdotes regarding our domestic habits, etc.; for things of very little importance in themselves are pleasing and interesting when they relate to separated friends.

I am rejoiced to see that at length you fix a period at which we may hope for your return to Britain. Happiness depends so much less upon the quantity of fortune than upon the power of enjoying what we have, that I am sure you, my dear brother, after having spent your early years in acquiring a respectable fortune, will not delay enjoying it for the purpose of making it still larger. Remember Scotland will have a claim on you for one part of the year, if upon trial you like its society and climate; and I am so true a Scotchman that I think it impossible you can dislike them. Besides, our women are generally reckon'd handsome and accomplished, and I hope, notwithstanding your attachment to old England, you will give our Nymphs a chance of setting their caps at you. Your sister says you positively must be married soon after your arrival, so you must prepare for fetters even in the land of liberty.

I would send you political news were there any worth sending; those from France are singularly gloomy. . . . Subjected to a very rigorous military Government, all attempt at domestic happiness seems to be given up for the *fracas* of public amusements, and immense parties, where none dare tell his mind to his next neighbour, should it involve anything more important than an opinion on the merit of the newest *cantata* or *figurante*. Besides all this a pestilential disorder is now raging at Paris.

At home the most remarkable event is the discovery of a plot to assassinate the best of kings by a set of low ruffians, the leaders of whom have been executed. Colonel Despard, the ring-leader of these miscreants, was once in the army, and had a character for bravery and skill in his profession. Being entrusted with some presents intended to conciliate the Chiefs of the Mosquito Indians in the Bay of Honduras, the worthy Colonel chose to appropriate the gifts to his own purposes, for which peculation he was broken by a Court Martial in the West Indies. Having become totally desperate in consequence of this well-merited disgrace, he embraced eagerly the opportunity of avenging himself on Government by embarking in all the seditious proceedings during the war, which procured him a lodging in Cold Bath Fields, where his fate was deplored and howled over by Sir Francis Burdett and other reforming members of the House of Commons. The first act of this worthy and oppressed patriot upon his liberation was to organise the murder of his Sovereign. It does not appear from his trial that any persons were associated with him, excepting the ruffians who were to be the immediate actors; but it is generally believed that he acted as the link betwixt these subordinate agents and a higher rank of conspirators, as it is hardly to be conceived that a person of sense and education would embark in so desperate a project without being assured of more powerful allies than

a set of low blackguards not exceeding thirty or forty in number. Colonel Despard died like a true Jacobin, neither fearing God nor regarding man.

The peace seems likely to hold, notwithstanding it is confidently asserted that we are to retain Malta as the only security against the preponderance which the French have acquired in the Mediterranean by the cession of Elba, and the Chief Consul having been placed at the head of the Cisalpine republic. Those who talk of the retention of Malta (and I have heard some very high authority on the subject) reason thus:—if Bonaparte does not wish to quarrel with this country, or again to possess himself of Egypt, which would produce an immediate breach, then our cession of Malta cannot be to him a matter of such importance as to precipitate him into war; but if he really wishes to have Egypt, the removal of our fleet and armies from Malta will be an indispensable preliminary, and such a removal would be followed by his immediately invading Egypt, and consequently by a war with this country under circumstances much more unfavourable than if we still held Malta; so that the proposed cession might accelerate, but could not possibly avert, a breach with France. Such were the sentiments which I heard delivered by a very eminent statesman, and I think there is good sense in them, though I do not pretend to understand the subject.

To return to domestic affairs; as soon as your sister is quite recovered, I intend we shall go to London, where I am called by some professional business; so we shall have the pleasure of seeing all our good friends in Piccadilly,[1] which will be no small gratification to me as well as to Charlotte. She is recovering from her indisposition uncommonly well, and desires a thousand expressions of the kindest affection to you. Joining cordially in all her good wishes, I am ever, most sincerely, your truly affectionate brother,

WALTER SCOTT.

[1] The Dumergues, old and tried friends of Mrs. Scott's mother.

TO HARRIET, COUNTESS OF DALKEITH, *afterwards* DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUCH.[1]

Mr. Scott has the honour to return to Lady Dalkeith Mr. Beattie's copy of *Tamlane* with most respectful thanks. Mr. Scott has adopted several of the verses, which are very beautiful, particularly those describing the march of the Fairies, although they have rather a modern cast. It is presumed Mr. B. is no poet himself, but is there not or has there ever been a rhyming clergyman in the neighbourhood? The following verse is certainly too polished for a popular ballad:—

> We sleep in rosebuds soft and sweet,
> We revel in the stream,
> We wanton lightly on the wind,
> Or glide on a sunbeam.[2]

Mr. Scott sends for Lady Dalkeith's perusal 3 cantos of an unfinished poem, in which her Ladyship will recognize her friend Gilpin Horner—at least the general idea of the Goblin page is taken from that tale. To make the story fully intelligible a number of historical notes will be necessary; in the meantime Lady Dalkeith will have the goodness to attend to the following facts.

Dame Janet Beatoun, Lady Buccleuch, who flourished in Queen Mary's time, was a woman of high spirit and great talents. According to the superstition of the times, the vulgar imputed her extraordinary abilities to supernatural knowledge. If Lady Dalkeith will look into the Introduction to the *Border Ballads*, pages xv. and xxix.,

[1] This first letter regarding the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* gratified the noble lady to whom it was addressed. It is still preserved at Dalkeith, together with a handful of Scott's and Campbell's verses (then unpublished), apparently in the clear flowing penmanship of both poets. Among them is a transcript of Hogg's *Gilmanscleugh*, and all were sent by Scott, no doubt, to interest Lady Dalkeith in his brother bards.

[2] Although Scott suspected the modern origin of the lines, he inserted them in his version of *Tamlane*, but Professor Child has not included the doubtful stanzas in his critical edition of *English and Scotch Ballads*.

she will find some accounts of a deadly feud betwixt the clans of Scott and Kerr, which, among other outrages, occasioned the death of Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch, the husband of Janet Beatoun, who was slain by the Kerrs in the streets of Edinburgh. The lady resented the death of her husband by many exploits against the Kerrs and their allies. In particular the Laird of Cranstoun fell under her displeasure, and she herself headed a party of 300 horse with the intention of surprising and killing that baron in the Chapel of St. Mary, beside St. Mary's Loch at the head of Yarrow. The baron escaped, but the lady burned the chapel and slew many of his attendants. She possessed interest enough with Queen Mary to procure the reversal of a sentence of forfeiture pronounced against Walter Scott of Harden and other gentlemen who had attended her upon the expedition.

The feud was finally ended by Cranstoun marrying the lady's daughter. It must also be remembered that Sir Michael Scott is renowned in tradition as a wizard. His books were supposed to be buried with him, but no one durst dig them up on account of the terrible spells which they contained.

The poem has drawn itself out to such a length that it cannot be received into the third volume of the *Minstrelsy*; when finished it will consist of four or five cantos. Mr. Scott has thought of publishing it separately and inscribing it to Lord Dalkeith, if his Lordship will permit it to be honoured with his name. When Lady Dalkeith has satisfied her curiosity, and that of any of her noble friends, if her Ladyship will have the goodness to return the loose sheets, Mr. Scott hopes soon to request her Ladyship's acceptance of a complete copy.[1]

Castle Street—Monday.

[1] For the origin and growth of this poem, see the autobiographical introduction to the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, prefixed to the large 8vo edition of the Poems.

CHAPTER II

1805-1806

EDINBURGH AND ASHESTIEL

"O, dread was the time, and more dreadful the omen,
When the brave on Marengo lay slaughtered in vain,
And, beholding broad Europe bow'd down by her foemen,
PITT closed in his anguish the map of her reign!
Not the fate of broad Europe could bend his brave spirit
To take for his country the safety of shame;
O then in her triumph remember his merit,
And hallow the goblet that flows to his name."

Song at the Pitt Anniversary.

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1805-1806

Lay of Last Minstrel, published by Longmans in 4to, January 1805.

Partnership with James Ballantyne as Printer, May 1805.

Song, *The Bard's Incantation*, autumn 1805.

Visit to Cumberland and the Lakes, do.

Dryden undertaken.

Son Charles born Dec. 24th, 1805.

Visit to London regarding appointment as Clerk of Session, February 1806.

Appointment confirmed, March 8th, 1806.

Melville Banquet, June 27th, 1806.

Ballads and Lyrical Pieces published in 8vo, Longmans, Sept. 1806.

Slingsby and Hodgson's Memoirs published in 8vo, Constable, Oct. 1806.

Contributions to *Edinburgh Review*—

Froissart
Col. Thornton's Sporting Tour } in No. 10, Jan. 1805.

Godwin's Fleetwood in No. 11, April 1805

Ossian
New Practice of Cooking } in No. 12, July 1805

Todd's Spenser in No. 13, Oct. 1805.

Ellis' Early Romances } in No. 14, Jan. 1806.

Miseries of Human Life
Herbert's Poems and Translations } in No. 17, Oct. 1806.

CHAPTER II.

TO WORDSWORTH.[1]

EDINBURGH, *16th March* 1805.

MY DEAR WORDSWORTH,—I duly received both your letters, and, before the last arrived, had deeply sympathised in your late melancholy loss.[2] The same dreadful catastrophe deprived me of a near relation,[3] a delightful and promising youth, the hope and pride of his parents. He had just obtained a cadetship, and parted from us in all the ardour of youthful hope and expectation, leaving his father (a brother of my mother) almost heartbroken at his departure. But I will not dwell on the grief and despair which his fate occasioned, except to assure you that in the scenes of distress which I was obliged to witness, and in which indeed I shared sincerely, I often thought of the similar effects which the same disastrous event must necessarily have produced in your little family of Love. I hope you will struggle against the too great indulgence which grief is apt to exact, and that Miss Wordsworth will call her admirable good sense to assist her in calming her feelings under this unexpected and dreadful blow. It is a vile

[1] Readers of Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour* do not require to be reminded that Scott and Wordsworth met for the first time at Lasswade Cottage in September 1803. Many of Wordsworth's letters to Scott have been printed by Mr. Lockhart and Professor Knight, but there are few of Scott's to Wordsworth existing, and the above is the only one available for this book.

[2] The Shipwreck of the *Abergavenny*, East Indiaman, commanded by Wordsworth's brother John.

[3] A son of Dr. Daniel Rutherford.

selfish maxim to say "Sorrow not for what cannot be recalled," and those who can give the advice are, I hope, the only persons who could accept of the consolation it affords. But that which *is* has stronger claims on us than that which is gone, and I hope in the discharge of your mutual duties, and in the task of mutual consolation your sorrow will in time be robbed of its bitterness.

I am truly happy that you have found anything to interest or amuse you in my romance.[1] It has the merit of being written with heart and good will, and for no other reason than to discharge my mind of the ideas which from infancy have rushed upon it. I believe such verses will be generally found interesting, because enthusiastic.

Having thus expelled from my brain the Fiend of Chivalry, and sent him to wander at will through the world, I must sweep and garnish the empty tenement and decorate or rather fill it with something useful, lest the former tenant should return with seven devils worse than himself, and take possession for good and aye.

And now let me tell you that I am very much flattered by your choosing Yarrow for a subject of the verses sent me in your first letter, which shall not pass out of my own hand, nor be read except to those worthy of being listeners. At the same time, I by no means admit your apology, however ingeniously and artfully stated, for not visiting the bonnie holms of Yarrow, and certainly will not rest till I have prevailed upon you to compare the ideal with the real stream. We are usually now (during the vacation of the court) within three miles of Yarrow by a wild and mountainous pass. Our own farm is on Tweedside, a sweet and simple spot, which I hope you will one day visit. I intended a poetical request of this nature in your own measure and versification, but postpone it for the present.

[1] *The Lay of the Last Minstrel.*

We have Broad-meadow upon Yarrow, which, with the addition of green or fair or any other epithet of one syllable, will give truth to the locality and supply the place of Burnhill meadow, which we have not.[1] There are some good lines in the old Ballad, the hunted hare for instance, who mourns that she must leave fair Leaderhaugh and cannot win to Yarrow. And this from early youth has given my bosom a thrill when sung or repeated.

> For many a place stands in hard case,
> Where blithe folks kend nae sorrow;
> 'Mongst Homes that dwelt on Leader side,
> And Scotts that lived on Yarrow.[2]

I like your swan upon St. Mary's Lake. How came you to know that it is actually frequented by that superb bird?

My mind is much set upon accepting your flattering invitation this approaching [autumn]. Our courts do not rise till the 12th of July, when we have some liberty, and I would fain hope that I may be then able to see you on the banks of Derwent among the scenes you have immortalised.[3] But I have many duties to discharge, and cannot always be the absolute master of my own time. May I hope to hear from you at your leisure moments? I beg kindest compliments to your sister and Mrs. Wordsworth, in which Charlotte cordially joins.—Yours truly,

W. Scott.

[1] The verses referred to of course were *Yarrow Unvisited*. Wordsworth had requested a name more true to the place than "Burn Mill" in the line

"The sweets of Burn Mill meadow."

The line, however, stands in the published poem as originally written, and with good reason, as the name occurs in one of the old Yarrow songs.

[2] From "Leader Haughs and Yarrow."—See Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany*.

[3] Mr. and Mrs. Scott went to the English Lakes before the summer was over, and there met the Wordsworths, and also Humphry Davy and Southey.

Southey returned Scott's visit in October, when he spent three days at Ashestiel.

FROM FRANCIS JEFFREY.[1]

EDINBURGH, 19*th August* 1805.

MY DEAR SCOTT,—It is not a trouble but a great pleasure and consolation to me to answer your kind letter. I am indeed at this moment of all men the most miserable and disconsolate; but it is a kind of relief for me to talk of my wretchedness to those at least who have given me proofs of their sympathy without any solicitation.

You do not know, my dear Scott, how entirely I had limited all my notions of earthly happiness to domestic society and affection, and how completely I had found it there without intermission or alloy. It was rather early to part with it, and just when fortune was beginning to smile upon us, and friends to increase in number and value.

I cannot come soon to Ashestiel. That journey was almost the latest subject of my poor Kitty's solicitude, and she talked of it with delight and confidence almost as long as she was able to talk of anything. There is nothing indeed which melts and overcomes me so completely in the recollection of her last illness, as the unquenchable and unbroken hope with which she looked forward to her recovery and future enjoyments. . . . She had been so often ill, indeed, and had always recovered so rapidly that it scarcely entered into my imagination that there could be one illness of which she could not recover, and the

[1] Scott had known Jeffrey very intimately from 1792, and when the latter became Editor of the *Edinburgh Review* he naturally joined him as contributor and near ally. For a few years (1803-1806) there was scarcely a number of the *Review* which did not contain one or more articles from his pen, but Jeffrey's political papers gradually lessened Scott's zeal, and finally, in 1808, when the *Quarterly* was planned, changed his friendly contributor into an avowed opponent of the critic, though his friendly feelings for the man remained unaltered.

Of Scott's early letters to Jeffrey none have been preserved, and there is only one of 1818 which is printed in the Appendix to Cockburn's life of his friend.

The foregoing touching note from Jeffrey refers to the death of his young wife.

cheerful magnanimity of her temper charmed away all apprehensions from those who were about her.

I am very well, I thank you, except that I have miserable nights and feel torpid all day. I have some thoughts of going into the country for a day or two, but I cannot force myself to leave my Kitty's grave at a distance. I hope to be able to come to you by and bye, and am always, dear Scott, very gratefully and affectionately yours,

F. JEFFREY.

I am afraid I shall be able to do but little for the *Review* next time. I rely on your friendship to help to supply my deficiency.

TO MISS NICHOLSON.[1]

EDINBURGH, 24*th December* 1805.

MY DEAR MISS NICHOLSON,—I have the pleasure to acquaint you that Charlotte last night added a little boy to our family, and that they are both as well as you could wish—that is, as well as possible. In every other respect your Castle Street friends have every reason to be contented and happy. Our family are healthy and strong; your little favourite, Sophia, turns out a very clever girl of her age, and gives great content to her instructors. I am at pains with her education, because you know "learning is better than house or land." At the same time, my own prospects are so fair that I have every reason to think I shall soon be able to make a very decent provision for my little people. This little fellow is to be called Charles, after brother Charles, whose sudden marriage gave us both pleasure and surprise. I incline to think that this connection will induce him to remain some time longer in India. As my countrywomen, like my countrymen, go all

[1] Miss Nicholson had been Mrs. Scott's companion and friend before marriage, *ante*, p. 8.

over the world, I have taken it into my head he may have lighted upon one of them.

Adieu, my dear Madam: I hope you will let me know you are well and happy.—Believe me, your very faithful humble servant, Walter Scott.

FROM LORD DALKEITH.

Dalkeith House, *February* 20, 1806.

My dear Sir,—I do most cordially and sincerely felicitate you on having obtained your commission at last, from the Secretary's office. I should have said "Gratulor" sooner, had I not been somewhat more occupied lately than usual with a variety of avocations,—none very pleasant.

My children are going on very well, which (as you know) is a salve to a parent's mind, however otherwise distressed.

Lord Spencer (as a professed Patron of Literature) has done what he ought to have done in regard to you, independent of the fairness of the request. You are now to snap your fingers at the Bar. But you are not to be idle. We shall expect much from your leisure. Why have we no good, compendious Border History?[1] Not because it is *not* wanted, but because no person willing, or competent to the task has yet undertaken a work interesting to most, but particularly so to many of your best friends and admirers.

You are too modest in comparing yourself to anything extraordinary in the deficiency or superabundance of nature (*vide* your own letter).[2] For the credit of London,

[1] See Scott's Letter to Lord Dalkeith, Nov. 23, 1806, p. 59 of the present volume.

[2] This excellent letter from Charles, Earl of Dalkeith, afterwards 4th Duke of Buccleuch, is a reply to one from Scott dated London, 11th February, intimating that he had been successful in obtaining his appointment as Clerk of Session. The office was worth about £1000 (subsequently £1300) a year, but until 1811 Scott derived no pecuniary benefit from it, as he

let it be said that the *Last Minstrel* is not unnoticed, but that he is "high placed in hall a welcome guest."

This shows the intrinsic merit of your work.

We have many local reasons for admiring the poem. The Londoners have no reason for admiring it but that it possesses real general merit, and might be read with interest and infinite pleasure by an erudite and judicious Englishman, as well as by a partial Borderer or Scott.

Talk not, think not, of Politics; go to the Hills and converse with the Spirit of the Fell, or any spirit but the spirit of party, which is the fellest fiend that ever disturbed Harmony and social pleasure. One cannot keep quite clear of its clutches, but thank God, it has only slightly scratched me as yet. My star of attraction is set.[1] I shall only say he was the mightiest man (take him for all in all) that ever lived. His last effort to recover the lost liberties and independence of Europe, the means he imagined, and those he realised, were truly gigantic. He could not control fate; far less could he make Mack a General, or Francis[2] a rational being. Peace to his manes and honour to his memory, and in my mind unutterable grief and eternal regret. Lady D. desires to be kindly remembered.—Yours sincerely, DALKEITH.

TO LEYDEN.

EDINBURGH, *5th July* 1806.

MY DEAR LEYDEN,—You cannot doubt that the receipt of your letter[3] from Pulo Penang, dated 20th

had arranged that his predecessor, Mr. George Home, should draw the whole salary as long as he lived; an arrangement which gave rise to many humorous complaints in his letters for the next five years, on his old friend being such an adept in the art of prolonging life. See *Life*, vol. ii. pp. 305-8.

[1] Pitt died on the 23rd of the previous month.

[2] The Austrian Emperor and his General.

[3] Not in the Abbotsford collection. A characteristic epistle from Pulo Penang to another friend, dated October 24th, 1805, is given by Scott in the Biography of Leyden. *Prose Works*, vol. iv. pp. 178-185.

November, gave Charlotte and me the greatest pleasure, more especially as it contains the very first lines which we have received from you since you went to India, or indeed which have ever reached Europe, excepting a letter of some length to your father. But it was doubly acceptable at the present moment, because the reports of your illness reached Europe in such an exaggerated form, that we had every reason to apprehend we had lost you entirely, which you may imagine gave us sincere distress. Letters have also arrived safe to Heber, to Ballantyne, to Constable, and I believe, to some of your other friends.

I am happy to see your health is mending; pray take care of it for the sake of your friends and of literature. You may sow the seed and raise the crop of Oriental acquisitions in India; but we in Europe are, by all the rules of the East India Company, entitled to the exclusive profit of the harvest, and should you disable yourself from transmitting us our lawful dues, it will be but a sorry account of your stewardship.

I wish from my soul, the brass cauldron in which you traversed the Indian torrent had possessed the qualities of Medea's kettle, and renewed you, blood, liver, lights, and limb, to the full vigour of a true Moss-trooper. In the circumstances, however, I should have been rather alarmed that the previous process of hewing to pieces might have preceded the embarkation without producing the same marvellous effects experienced by Osen,[1] or whatever his name was.

Now, as I know you must be gasping for European intelligence, I will endeavour to gratify you with such particulars as I think will be interesting to you. In the first place, as to my own affairs, your little friend and hostess continues the same kind and affectionate companion. She begs to be very kindly remembered to you, and we very

[1] Æson, Jason's father.

often talk of you, and mourned long over what then seemed to me your unaccountable silence. We beg you will take the greatest care of your letters in future, and you may depend upon hearing from me very often. Indeed, I should have written long ere now, but had no means of directing to you.

The cottage is no longer in our possession. We abandoned it with regret; but it was grown too small for my increasing family, and the neighbourhood began to be inconveniently populous. I therefore have taken a lease of the house and estate of Ashestiel. You remember this little mansion upon the Tweed, where we dined with the Miss Rutherfords and the Miss Russells. I have subset the whole of the sheep farm, which is valuable and extensive, and retained in my own hands a small arable farm for cows, horses, sheep for the table, etc. Here we live all the summer like little kings, and only wish that you could take a scamper with me over the hills in the morning, and return to a clean table-cloth, a leg of forest mutton, and a blazing hearth in the afternoon. Walter has acquired the surname of Gilnockie, being large of limb and bone, and dauntless in disposition, like that noted chieftain. Your little friend Sophia is grown a tall girl, and I think promises to be very clever, as she discovers uncommon acuteness of apprehension. We have, moreover, a little roundabout girl with large dark eyes, as brown, as good-humoured, and as lively as the mother that bore her, and of whom she is the most striking picture. Over and above all this there is *in rerum natura* a certain little Charles, so called after the Knight of the Crocodile; but of this gentleman I can say but little, as he is only five months old, and consequently not at the time of life when I can often enjoy the honour of his company.

I have exchanged my practice at the Bar in order to become one of the principal Clerks of Session, which, with

my Sheriffdom, forms a very good official appointment. The worst of it is that I draw little immediate profit from my new office till the death of an old gentleman who resigned in my favour; but it is to be supposed he will soon make a final resignation of it, when I succeed to near £1000 a year, which, as you know my habits are more for comfort than show, will amply supply my turn.

About literary labours I must inform you that the fourth edition of the *Lay* is just come out, and is to be followed by an edition of the *Minstrelsy* and of *Sir Tristrem*. I will take the safest measures I can to forward to you sets of these books and of any others which I think likely to interest you. The reception of the *Lay* has been very flattering, and the sale both rapid and extensive.

I am somewhat tempted to undertake a Highland poem upon the same plan. Meanwhile my present *grande opus* consists in an uniform edition of Dryden's works, which, as you know, have never been collected, with notes critical and illustratory by the Editor. This fills up most of my leisure hours, and as the duties of my office are very slight,—which was indeed my principal motive for asking it,—these leisure hours are numerous. I only wish I could have your assistance as formerly in arranging, digesting, and contributing to my labour, or rather to my amusement.

I have one or two trifling undertakings besides Dryden, but they are hardly worth mentioning, though I may probably detail them in another letter before these ships sail.

Camp[1] is as much in favour, as stout and hearty as ever.

[1] The earliest of Scott's favourite dogs. He is figured in Saxon's portrait of his master, and in Raeburn's picture now at Bowhill. Howe also painted Camp's portrait, which Scott gave to Mr. Stevenson, Bookseller, Edinburgh, with a description of the dog, which by the courtesy of Mr. T. G. Stevenson is now printed at page 209.

He had a very violent illness about a year ago, which had like to have carried him off. He was unable to stir for about two days, and eat nothing but some milk, which I forced into his mouth with a teaspoon; but by dint of using that noble remedy *un petit lavement*, frequently repeated, we brought on a crisis, and his health was restored, to the general joy of the family.

Enough of myself; so let me now tell you of some other friends. I was in London last spring, where I saw Heber frequently. His father being now dead and he in possession of a large property, his diligence indefatigable, and his taste undoubted, he will be soon in possession of the noblest library in England. Ellis,[1] poor fellow, is a martyr to the liver, but carries on his studies with vigour. He has finished his *Romances* in three volumes—a most lively and entertaining performance. Most of those in the Auchinleck MS.—our old friend—were well ransacked upon this occasion. Yet, though I cannot tell why, this work has not been quite so popular as the *Specimens*. To come nearer home, Ballantyne continues to flourish like a green bay tree, but instead of being planted by a river, he has established at the bottom of St. Mary's Wynd a hall, equal to that which the Genie of the lamp built for Aladdin in point of size, but rather less superbly furnished, being occupied by about a dozen of presses.

Constable goes on to improve in circumstances, trade, and size. He has associated with him young Hunter of Blackness, who, bringing £3000 or £4000 to the stock, has enabled him to outdo his former outdoings.

Tom Brown[2] is well, but having published a collection of poems which were rather too metaphysical for the public taste, he has become shyer than ever.

[1] George Ellis, the accomplished author of the *Specimens of the Early English Poets*, 3 vols., etc.

[2] Dr. Thomas Brown, afterwards Professor of Moral Philosophy, Edinburgh.

We are now assured that after a vigorous contest with the India Directors on the subject of Lord Lauderdale, Lord Minto[1] is finally to go out as Governor-General. You know he is one of my most intimate friends in that rank of life. I intend to press your pursuits and person very strongly on his notice before he leaves Europe. He is a man of taste and literature; so pray arrange matters so as to keep in his way. Charlotte sends you *mille choses*, but I will write soon and tell you all about her messages. —Ever yours truly, WALTER SCOTT.

TO SOUTHEY.[2]

April 1806.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have been in London "pursuing fortune's slippery ball," and have been fortunate enough, notwithstanding the change of men and measures,[3] to secure the reversion of a considerable patent office which was destined for me by Mr. Pitt and Lord Melville! I venture to hope my success has given some pleasure to my friends at Greta Hall and Grasmere. It is particularly acceptable to me, as it enables me without imprudence, or indeed injustice to my family, to retire from the Bar, which I have always thought and felt to be an irksome and even hateful profession.

I will not fail to put Mr. Duppa's work under Judge Jeffrey's view in the light you would have it. He is not, you know, the most tractable of critics, and I never venture to answer for him, as indeed we differ in many most material points of taste; but he will not willingly do an ill-natured thing to a person of your friend's descrip-

[1] Lord Minto was appointed Governor-General of Bengal, July 1806.

[2] Scott and Southey had previously met in the summer of 1805. See note, page 29.

[3] The Coalition Government under Lord Grenville, known as that of "All the Talents."

tion. In fact he is the old character, the best good man with the worst-natured muse (if there be a muse of criticism) that ever wielded the quill of an Aristarchus.

I grieve we are to lose you in summer, and were it not that I expect so much from your history,[1] I could willingly hope that your visit to the Douro and the Tagus should be converted into another trip to Tweedside, and your embarkation on the Bay of Biscay into such a voyage as we made together on Derwent water, or at least into another perilous pilgrimage in my frail bark, where the ponderous Grecian[2] proved more than a counterpoise for the two bards. Seriously, if you do not go to Portugal, what think you of varying the scene by a winter in Edin^r^? You will find plenty of books, and I venture to assure you plenty of friends.—Believe me ever, dear Southey, yours sincerely,

WALTER SCOTT.[3]

[1] A history of Portugal on which Southey was at work for many years, but of which only the third portion, treating of Brazil (in 3 vols. 4to), was published.

[2] An allusion to Southey's visit in the preceding year, when he had as his companion Peter Elmsley (the distinguished Hellenist), and when Scott took them salmon-spearing on the Tweed in his coble.

[3] The foregoing is a reply to Mr. Southey's letter of February 4th, in which he says: "Wordsworth was with me last week. He has of late been more employed in correcting his poems than in writing others; but one piece he has written upon the ideal character of a soldier, than which I have never seen anything more full of meaning and sound thought. The subject was suggested by Nelson's death, though having no reference to it. He had some thoughts of sending it to the *Courier*, in which case you will easily recognise his hand. . . .

I know not whether I shall ever see the Tweed and the Yarrow; yet I should be sorry to think I should not. Your scenery has left upon me a strong impression, more so from the delightful associations which you and your country poets have inseparably connected with it. I am going in the autumn, if Bonaparte will let me, to streams as classical and as lovely—the Mondego of Camoens, the Douro and the Tagus; but I shall not find such society on their banks. Remember me to my two fellow-travellers [Jeffrey and another friend]. Heaven keep them and me also from being the subject of any further experiments upon the infinite compressibility of matter. If Hogg should publish his poems, I shall be very glad to do what little I can in getting subscribers for him." [1]

[1] Southey's *Life*, vol. iii. p. 20.

TO MISS SEWARD.

Ashestiel, 10*th April* 1806.

. . . *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* has been for a long time so much out of my thoughts that your approbation recalls very pleasingly the feelings with which I composed it, and is something like the eulogium upon a departed friend. Could I have thought it would have attracted so much of your attention, I would have endeavoured to have written it better, and in consequence might very likely not have done it so well. Still, the flimsiness of the story might have been corrected by a little thought and attention, which I now regret not having bestowed upon it.

This is the second day of my retreat to this farm, and I have read your beautiful verses to Father Tweed . . . . verses I exceedingly regret not having received when I was in Cumberland, as my poetical friends Wordsworth and Southey must have been as much delighted with them as I am. I spent some time in their society very pleasantly, and Southey repaid me by visiting my farm. They are certainly men of very extraordinary powers. Wordsworth in particular is such a character as only exists in romance—virtuous, simple, and unaffectedly restricting every want and wish to the bounds of a very narrow income, in order to enjoy the literary and poetical leisure which his happiness consists in. Were it not for the unfortunate idea of forming a new school of poetry these men are calculated to give it a new impulse; but I think they sometimes lose their energy in trying to find, not a better but a different path from what has been travelled by their predecessors. I saw nothing in Southey like literary jealousy, and should think him above it; certainly his bearing is not always and altogether so easy and pleasing as that of Wordsworth, but I think it is mere manner. Individually, as I was not at all a subject for his jealousy, I am certain that neither did I excite any, though

much kind and free discussion took place amongst us. I agree with you in admiring *Madoc* very much: the descriptions of natural objects are most admirable, and may certainly rank with any that our poetry affords. Mr. Southey seems to excel in seizing either those circumstances which give character to a landscape, or such as are so closely connected with them that the one being suggested to our imagination naturally and almost necessarily recalls the rest. I am not quite sure that the subject of such and so long a poem is altogether so well chosen. The exploits of Madoc necessarily recall the history of Cortez and the voyage of Columbus, and this mixture of truth and fancy is not pleasant. Whether it is owing to this, or that the heroes and heroines considered as men and women have little of that discriminating character which is absolutely necessary to interest a reader, I am unable to decide; but so it is that *Madoc* sometimes requires an effort on the part of the reader to accompany him on this journey. It is, however, an effort amply repaid by the fine passages which perpetually occur throughout the poem. To the admirers of Southey I fear *Thalaba* will prove more interesting, in spite of the heretical structure of the measure, if indeed it deserves that name.[1]

I think were you to know my little friend Jeffrey you would perhaps have some mercy on his criticisms; not but he often makes his best friends lose patience by that love of severity which drives justice into tyranny: but, in fact, I have often wondered that a man who loves and admires poetry so much as he does, can permit himself the severe, or sometimes unjust, strictures which he fulminates even against the authors whom he most approves of, and whose works actually afford him most delight. But what shall we say? Many good-natured country Tories (myself for

[1] *Thalaba* was published in 1800, and severely criticised in the first number of the *Edinburgh Review*.

example) take great pleasure in coursing and fishing, without any impeachment to their amiabilities, and probably Jeffrey feels the same instinctive passion for hunting down the bards of the day. In common life the lion lies down with the kid; for not to mention his friendship for me now of some standing, he had the magnanimity (absolutely approaching to chivalrous reliance upon the faith of a foe) to trust himself to Southey's guidance in a boat on Windermere, when it would have cost the poet nothing but a wet jacket to have overset the critic, and swum triumphantly to shore, and this the very day the review of *Madoc* was published.[1] I am afraid, however, you will hardly allow my apology any more than for an Arcadian slaughtering and cutting up his favourite lamb. . . .— Believe me, dear Miss Seward, very faithfully your obedient servant, WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY DALKEITH.

Monday.

MY DEAR LADY DALKEITH,—Our Ettrick Shepherd has laid by his pastoral reed for the more profitable employment of valuing sheep land, in which he has given great satisfaction to those who engaged him, being a remarkably intelligent, clever fellow in the line of his business. His present object is to have the Duke's patronage in case his Grace wishes the service of such a person, as is reported. If there be the least chance of such an application being successful, I will take care to procure, and send to the

[1] *Madoc* was reviewed in No. xiii., 1805. Southey had seen the obnoxious article before publication, as he was in Edinburgh early in October 1805. Jeffrey had been invited to meet him at supper, but declined doing so until he had given him an opportunity of reading the criticism on *Madoc*, of which he then sent the printed sheets. The poet read the paper with natural indignation, which he had the good sense to repress, and he met the critic with such good humour and courtesy that Jeffrey went back with him to the Lakes in the same stage-coach! Southey did the honours of Keswick, as mentioned by Scott.

Duke or Mr. Riddell, the necessary attestations of his skill and character. His charge seems moderate, and I will answer for his honesty: and he might be tried on a small scale at first.

Lord D. being absent on his Roxburgh campaign, I entreat your Ladyship (though I know you do not meddle with business) to take an opportunity of putting the enclosed into the Duke's hands. If I did not think he might really be of use, I would not on any consideration recommend him. Indeed I fear the Duke will think his business is getting a little too much out of sober prose when one poet is dabbling in his elections, and another proffering his services to value his sheep farms. But I really do not feel entitled to suppress this application, which carries something in it more feasible than anything hitherto proposed for this poor man, and also promises some advantages for the property from his real knowledge and skill in the business.

I trust to your Ladyship's usual goodness to pardon this intrusion.

TO THE SAME.

Dear Lady Dalkeith,—I was rather surprised to learn by a letter received yesterday, from my friend the Shepherd, that he had taken the liberty of applying personally to your Ladyship about his affairs, which I certainly should not have recommended to him to do. I have no reason to think that his disappointment can be violent, as I had expressed to him my strong conviction that his Grace must, from the mode in which he manages his estates, have many claims entitled to precedence both upon his justice and liberality. I have communicated to him your Ladyship's letter, and I am sure that your sympathy with his situation and extreme delicacy of expression, must tend greatly to alleviate his feelings of disappointment, if he indeed harbours any. It is one of the inconveniences

attached to exalted rank, that the expectations of suitors are apt to be unreasonable, because founded on ignorance; but a kind answer to a petitioner, even when unfavourable, is often equivalent to an ungracious grant of his request. I certainly hope to pay my respects at Langholm—perhaps to bring with me my friend Mr. Skene of Rubislaw, an amiable and accomplished young man, and for a gentleman the best draughtsman I ever saw. I wish him to take a peep at Hermitage, etc. Lord Dalkeith was so good as to say I might use the freedom to bring him to Langholm.—Ever your Ladyship's devoted humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT.[1]

TO LADY ABERCORN.[2]

9th June 1806.

MY DEAR LADY MARCHIONESS,—Did you ever hear the French parrot's apology for its silence,—"Je pense plus;" because, if you have not, I intend to adopt it for my own ungracious taciturnity, because during the period of busy

[1] There are no dates to these two letters, but they have been placed under 1806, as Hogg, in writing to Scott in the April of that year, says with characteristic indifference:—

"My dear Scott, I wrote to Lady Dalkeith on the same day I wrote you last, simply thanking her for her kind attentions. . . . I have met with no disappointment from his Grace's refusal. Never be concerned about that!" And he concludes with this delicious bit of innocent egotism and shrewd criticism on *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

"I had a present of a very elegant copy of the *Lay*, lately, from a gentleman in Edinburgh, to whom I was ashamed to confess that I had it not. This is just to give you a hint that the present should have come from some other hand. I am delighted above measure with many of the descriptions, and with none more than that of William of Deloraine, but I have picked some faults which I have not now time to explain. . . . I have not yet discovered what the terrible parade of fetching Michael Scott's book from the tomb proved, or what was done with it of consequence before it was returned, and fear it will be construed as resorted to for the sake of furnishing the sublime and awful description.—I am, your ever grateful SHEPHERD."

[2] The Marchioness of Abercorn, to whom Scott wrote very confidentially, was Anne Jane, daughter of the second Earl of Arran. She died in May 1827, thus predeceasing Scott, but the long series of letters preserved by the noble lady shews how constant was their friendship,

idleness which has elapsed since I saw the cottage at the Priory, I have very often thought of it and its kind and condescending mistress.

When I had rejoined my little family, which I found at our own mountain farm, closed in by many a dark blue hill, I had a great number of trifles to adjust which the head of a family among us little people generally finds it best to look after himself. There were sheep to be bought and bullocks to be sold. There was a sick horse and a lame greyhound to be cured. There were salmon to be caught and poachers to be punished. Now, though I know very little about some of these matters, yet I find it very convenient to let it be supposed I am very knowing and anxious upon the subject, although it costs me a good deal of trouble to keep up my credit.

When I came to town I had to take possession of my new office, which your Ladyship will hardly suppose a very difficult one when you are informed that I am actually scribbling at my bureau amidst the clamour of the lawyers, —"the drowsy bench, the babbling hall,"[1] being my immediate neighbours. I have however acquired such a happy command over my imagination that even in these untoward circumstances I can represent to myself how beautiful the groves of the Priory must now appear in all the glory of midsummer foliage.

I have not forgot a promise so flattering to my vanity as that you would permit me to have a share in ornamenting the interior of the cottage. I am not coxcomb enough

how frequently Scott claimed her patronage, and how readily it was granted, sometimes for himself, but much oftener for others.

When Scott in earlier years visited London, either Sunning Hill, George Ellis's country house, or Lord Abercorn's villa, The Priory at Stanmore, was his favourite retreat from Saturday till Monday. Scott's connection with this family arose, in the first instance, from his father, and afterwards from his brother Thomas having the management of the Abercorn estates in Scotland.

[1] Blackstone, *The Lawyer's Farewell to his Muse.*

to use the common phrase that the Muses have been unpropitious, but the truth is that I have not been able to do anything lately that has pleased me, and consequently nothing that would be worthy of so honourable a station as the walls of the Cottage. I did two little things for Welsh tunes some time ago, and when I can furnish them with companions I will do myself the honour of sending them to the Priory.

I am much flattered by your Ladyship's inquiries about my literary engagements. My grand edition of Dryden's Works is advancing, I hope prosperously. The booksellers are publishing a fourth edition of the Lay, and also some of the ballads which call me father, from the Border collection that I formerly published. I intend to add to these last a few little things so as to make them into a little volume, which I will take an early opportunity of laying at your Ladyship's feet. Besides all this, I have a grand work in contemplation, but so distant, so distant that the distance between Edinburgh and Stanmore is nothing to it. This is a Highland romance of Love, Magic, and War, founded upon the manners of our mountaineers, with my stories about whom your Ladyship was so much interested. My great deficiency is that being born and bred not only a lowlander but a borderer, I do not in the least understand the Gaelic language, and therefore am much at a loss to find authentic materials for my undertaking. . . .—Adieu, my dear Lady Marchioness. Believe me, with the greatest respect and regard, ever your Ladyship's much obliged and most obedient humble servant, WALTER SCOTT.

TO THE SAME.

[EDIN., *June* 1806.]

DEAR LADY MARCHIONESS,—I enclose a trifling song[1]

[1] When Scott returned to Edinburgh from London in March he found some of his political opponents were dissatisfied that the appointment of Clerk of Session had been confirmed to him by the Whig

which was sung with immense approbation at a meeting of five hundred select friends of Lord Melville, from which your Ladyship will probably be of opinion that they approved too much of the sentiment to be very critical about the poetry. I also scratched down another ballad the morning of the day of meeting, of which a few copies have been printed, and if I can get one in time to save the post I will also enclose it. I am sure your Ladyship, with your usual goodness, will not suppose that by sending you these little foolish things, I think them at all worthy of your acceptance, but will just receive them as graciously as the Duchess in Don Quixote accepts of the half dozen acorns from the wife of Sancho Panza. There is in the printed ditty a little attempt at a tribute to the memory of the never to be forgotten Pitt, which drew tears from many of the jovial party to whom it was addressed. I have only room and time to add how much I always am the Marchioness of Abercorn's most faithful and respectful humble servant, WALTER SCOTT.

FROM LADY ROSSLYN.[1]

DYSART, *Thursday.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I certainly feel much flattered that you should have thought it worth while to have written to me[2] upon the subject of what I said to Mr. Rae. As I cannot

Government, and he resented this manifestation of feeling by a more active participation in party politics.

Three months after he was gazetted, a public dinner was given in Edinburgh on June 27th in honour of Lord Melville's acquittal, at which Scott was present. The song alluded to gave great offence to some of his friends, among others to Lady Rosslyn.

[1] Lady Rosslyn, eldest daughter of the Hon. Edward Bouverie, died in 1810. Scott, in writing of her to a common friend, says: "She is gone, with all the various talent and vivacity that rendered her society so delightful. I regret her loss the more as she died without ever making up some unkindness she had towards me for those foolish politics. It is an example of the great truth that life is too short for the indulgence of animosity."

[2] Scott's letter has not been preserved at Dysart House.

think my opinion can be of any consequence to you, I regret as much and perhaps more than you do, that any circumstances should arise to make a coolness between us; nor do I expect that the political sentiments of all my friends should be the same as mine, as a proof of which I believe you will recollect that politics was a topic upon which you and I never agreed, but in this particular instance I cannot help feeling the song alluded to as an uncalled for mark of personal disrespect to Mr. Fox.[1] The lesson he taught and practised during the course of his life was that of forgiveness of injuries; it is a lesson, which, much as I admire, I feel I cannot put in practice where he is concerned, as he would have done.

I beg this subject, which is unpleasant and even painful to me, may not be renewed. With my best compliments to Mrs. Scott, believe me, dear sir, yours sincerely,

H. ROSSLYN.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ASHESTIEL, BY SELKIRK,
6th August 1806.

MY DEAR LADY MARCHIONESS,— . . . I am now, thank God, got to my little farm, and I really wish I had the lamp of Aladdin or the tapestry of some other eastern Magician, whose name I have forgot, but you will find the story among the records of the immortal Scheherazade. Could I possibly command so easy a conveyance, I would certainly transport your Ladyship to this retreat, with which I have the vanity to think you would be pleased for a day, were it only for the extraordinary contrast between the scenery here and at the Priory.

Our whole habitation could dance very easily in your great *salon* without displacing a single moveable or endangering a mirror. We have no green pastures nor

[1] The song, in which occurred the unfortunate line *Tallyho to the Fox*, is given in Lockhart's Life.

stately trees, but to make amends, we have one of the most beautiful streams in the world, winding through steep mountains, which are now purple with the heath blossom.

We are eight miles from the nearest market-town, and four from the nearest neighbour. The last circumstance I by no means regret, but the first is productive of very curious shifts and ludicrous distresses well worthy of being recorded in the *Miseries of Human Life*,—a very diverting little volume which, if your Ladyship has not seen, I beg you will add to your book-shelves on my recommendation. For example, my scrutoire having travelled by some slow conveyance, I was obliged—not to mention searching half an hour for this solitary sheet of letter paper—to sally forth and shoot a crow to procure a quill, which performs its duty extremely ill, as your Ladyship is witness. I am afraid that this candid declaration of our wants, and the difficulty of supplying them, will make the Marchioness bless her stars that the lamp and tapestry is out of fashion. But don't be afraid too soon: for the main business of the day we have the best mutton in the world, and find by experience that the air of our hills makes an excellent sauce. Then we have pigs and poultry, and a whole apparatus of guns, fishing-rods, salmon spears, and nets for the employment of male visitors, who do not find their sport less agreeable because part of their dinner depends upon it.

Then grouse-shooting begins bye and bye, and I have some very good coveys on the moors, besides the privilege of going far and wide over those of my neighbour the Duke of Buccleuch, a favour not the less readily granted because, like many other persons in this world, I make more noise than I do mischief. Then, if all this is insufficient, you shall have hare soup; for am I not the Sheriff of the County, and may I not break the laws when I please and course out of season? Besides all this you shall have one

of the kindest welcomes which our hospitable mountaineers can afford. So pray don't quarrel with my lamp or tapestry any more. I only wish it was possible for you to make good this little dream.

I saw Lord and Lady Melville before I left town, and dined at Melville Castle. I never saw the veteran statesman looking better or in more high spirits. He was very full of the pleasant visit he had made at the Priory just before he set out. His journey, too, had been very flattering to his feelings—nothing but huzzaing and cheering in almost all the towns they had occasion to pass through. I was much tempted to accept of a kind invitation they gave me to their seat in the Highlands, where I could have collected some materials for my projected romance; on the other side I have copied a few verses which I intend to begin one of the Tales in my Highland Romance. They are supposed to be sung by an old *Seannachie* or man of Talk, or in short Tale-teller, who, by what accident I know as little as your Ladyship, has strolled into the Lowlands; but my mind was on this little crib, and I could not find in my heart to leave it.

I am a good deal interested in the discussions which have been proceeding concerning the Princess of Wales. Having had the honour to eat of her salt, I should be extremely sorry to think there was the least chance of her being trammelled, either by her own imprudence or otherwise, in the toils of her accusers. Of this however I hope there is no danger.[1]

[1] W. Stewart Rose had written to Scott on this subject on July 23rd: "I wish I could give you any satisfactory account of the Princess of Wales's affair. I feel entirely with you as to the cruelty of her situation, and, having eat her salt, have in some degree the same motive as yourself for being more particularly alive to her distress. From many circumstances which have reached mine ears, I am convinced that her persecution forms part of a most extravagant scheme, which nothing but the madness of the supposed projector could render credible. When I tell you that the Prince of Wales some time

I must now break off, as I must ride about ten miles to a County meeting about roads, being the dullest of all dull amusements, though country gentlemen have such a peculiar pleasure in it, that one of my neighbours used to travel with the Turnpike Act of Parliament in his pocket, till I told him it was against the law, which prohibits carrying concealed arms. I shall however see my friend and fishing crony Lord Somerville,[1] and get a cover for this letter, as the Marquis is, I suspect, long since in green Erin. Mrs. Scott has the honour to offer her respects, and I am, with sincere respect and regard, ever your Ladyship's most faithful humble servant, WALTER SCOTT.

FROM FRANCIS JEFFREY.

EDINR., 11 *Sept.* 1806.

MY DEAR SCOTT,—I am come back in safety to my lonely house in this lonely and deserted city, and I write to you immediately on my arrival, partly to comfort my spirits and partly to supplicate your assistance in my never-ending task of reviewing. Brougham has gone to Portugal. I made Horner idle by being with him. Thomson is buried under Records, and almost all my occa-

since openly affirmed that he had the power to crush the Princess of Wales when he pleased; that he formerly professed his entire indifference to her; and, though he then believed, or professed to believe, that she was all that her accusers at present maintain her to be, that the first paragraph of Lady Douglas's[1] evidence now states her information to be given either at his suggestion or command, . . . when all these things are put together you will, I think, agree with me in the conclusion to be deduced from them. In the meantime, she has, as I before hinted, afforded much matter for reproach, and what if substantiated against a woman educated in English habits, would amount to a moral conviction of guilt. As it is, I should no more suffer my opinions of her character to be influenced by such traits, than I should infer profligacy in a man from looseness of conversation. . . ."

[1] Wife of Sir John Douglas.

[1] John, 15th Baron, who for some years made the "Pavilion" on the Tweed his summer residence; he was Scott's companion in all field sports and his acknowledged master in Forestry.

sional allies and auxiliaries are scattered into watering-places, deriding all sorts of applications and laughing at all demonstrations of distress. You must do me a good spell of work this time, or there is no salvation for me. I depend upon Sir William's "Beattie,"[1] and I beg you will take some pains with it, and do not let your private affection suborn your critical impartiality. We once spoke of your leaving Beattie's metaphysics to me, and I still wish that you would. I read his "Truth" in London, and am ready to give a short character of it. It will be easy to interpolate it in your article. If you think it worth while you can give me a catch-word and block out the niche for it.

Will you look at Thornton's tour with the Dogs,[2] or anything else poetical or antiquarian that you hear of and I do not? I had an offer in London of a review of the *Miseries*, which it was necessary for me (at least for the good of the commonwealth) to accept, so I will not trouble you for that; but if you have devised any good things on the subject, I wish you would note them down that I may enrich my town article with them.[3]

I have a great deal to say to you of London and London men, but not at present; we must talk over these things some long afternoon. I still live in hope of passing four or five old days with you at Ashestiel before the 12 of November. Is there any chance of Wordsworth visiting Scotland this season? I understand W. Erskine is with

[1] Sir William Forbes's *Life of Beattie*.

[2] Col. Thornton's *Sporting Tour in France* had just been published. His previous work on Scotland was reviewed by Scott in the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1805.

[3] In reply to this appeal, Scott sent Jeffrey the humorous paper on Beresford's *Miseries of Human Life*, and a criticism on Herbert's *Icelandic Poems*, which were printed in the 17th No. (Oct. 1806), but if he reviewed Forbes' *Life of Beattie* he did not claim the article. The "metaphysics" in it are unquestionably Jeffrey's own, whoever wrote the rest of the amusing and caustic paper, which appeared in the number for April 1807. In Jeffrey's collected essays it is not fully reprinted.

you. Could you not stimulate his ungenerous indolence to do something for us? Poet Macneil or Billy Richardson? I shall keep his secret if he wishes to be private. Thomson will not be down for a fortnight at least, and Murray, I suppose, will come with him. The said Lord Register is very industriously employed in the Museum, and had the virtue to refuse going a very delightful little tour which Murray and I made to the Isle of Wight, that he might go on with his work without interruption. He is an admirable fellow, and I love and respect him more, the more I see of him. Farewell, my dear Scott; for heaven's sake do not procrastinate anything you mean to do for me, and do not let that old knave John Dryden, or those old knaves the Lords Commissioners of Justiciary, come between me and your good intentions. Remember me very kindly to Mrs. S., and believe me always, very affectionately yours,

F. Jeffrey.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

Ashestiel, 20*th September* 1806.

Nothing except the fairy Goodwill, or the Marchioness of Abercorn, could possibly supply the minute wants of their friends' domestic economy, at the distance of so many hundred miles as are between the Priory and the Forest of Ettrick.

The little parcel of quills is quite a treasure, and as to their everlasting duration I shall be happy to find that they possess a quality which we sometimes miss in Love, Friendship, and Fidelity, however fondly ascribed to them. The worst of the little packet is that it removes all apologies for a very indifferent hand, and transfers the blame so often laid on the innocent goose quill to the fingers of the clumsy writer himself.

I am quite delighted with the little heroine of your thunder storm. I hope she will not lose the benefit of

your Ladyship's protection, as she is certainly reserved for some great things. The state of our own weather has been most calamitous. Land floods, river floods, water spouts, and torrents and tempests of all kinds and denominations, have almost laid waste our country. One day the thunder was so tremendous as actually to affect my hearing for some time. The lightning broke within a hundred yards of our farm house, but fortunately did no damage, except that the concussion threw down the bricks, etc., from the top of the chimneys: we thought it quite near enough.[1] There were, however, no tragic incidents in our immediate neighbourhood except the death of a poor pony. Our rivers and brooks, always sufficiently rapid, became the most furious torrents which it was possible to behold. Ricks of hay, whole acres of young and old trees, even cattle and horses came swimming past us without the possibility of our giving any assistance. One gentleman of this country, Ogilvie of Chesters, has sustained more than a thousand pounds worth of damage, much of which is absolutely irreparable, as the very soil is carried away. Another gentleman has totally lost a large and valuable garden which a small rivulet that in general winded very peaceably through it, chose to carry off entirely.

Minto House was in great danger, the inhabitants driven to the upper rooms, as the lower part of the mansion was quite filled with water. A heroic cook-maid secured a sirloin of beef in her retreat, otherwise the plague of famine would have been added to the distresses of the sufferers.

I have been several days out upon the moors in hopes of making up a box of game for the Priory, but the wet weather has made the grouse so wild that neither by my own exertions nor those of my friends have I been ever

[1] "Charlotte (Mrs. Scott) resolved to die in bed like a good Christian; the servants said it was a preface to the end of the world."—Scott to Skene.

able to get above a brace or two in the day, and as they have not, like your Ladyship's kind present, the faculty of everlasting duration, to be fit to send they should all be killed on the same day. I still hope to be more fortunate.

I observe from the papers that the Marquis is still in Ireland, and has received the thanks of the country for his unceasing exertions in bringing Judge Fox to account. I suppose, however, his stay will not be very long in that country, as I presume there will be much bustle in the political world in consequence of Mr. Fox's death. He was certainly a great man, yet it so happened that there was never a human being whose talents were of less service to his country. How different from Pitt!

I am not apt to be very much exalted with any success which my literary essays have obtained, because I know very well how much is owing to chance, how much to novelty, and how little to any actual merit they may possess. But in telling me I have been so fortunate as to please Mr. Pitt, your Ladyship gives me something to be justifiably proud of till my dying day; and I can say without affectation that I would rather have the satisfaction of having been approved by him, though now dead, than by all the living statesmen and nobility in Europe. From the pilotless state in which the political vessel has remained since his death, his worst enemies may be taught to appreciate the extent of his unequalled talents.

We have been threatened with a visit of the Heir Apparent—a very serious business to the poor Scottish nobility who might have deemed it necessary to receive him, and somehow not very acceptable to the people at large. It certainly requires ingenuity in a personage whose very smile is a favour, and therefore who has popularity so much at his own command, to contrive so totally to

get rid of what naturally attaches to one from whom much might have been hoped, and little feared, if he had chosen it should be so.

Your Ladyship is very good to inquire after Dryden. I have, I assure you, been labouring very hard through the old libels and pamphlets of the time to complete the historical notices upon his political poems; and I am at least willing to hope that I have been in some degree successful. I am very anxious to procure copies if possible of three original letters that are among the Duke of Dorset's papers, written by Dryden to his Grace's ancestor, the witty Earl of Dorset. I am quite at a loss for a channel to approach this great man: perhaps you may be able either to give me some assistance, or at least your kind advice. If he is accessible to any of our Scottish nobles, I could contrive, directly or indirectly, to procure their mediation. It is of the greatest consequence to me to procure them if possible.

I hope with my next to send one or two little songs for the decoration of the Cottage.—Your very respectful and faithful, W. Scott.

TO LORD DALKEITH.

Edinr., Castle Street,
23 *Nov.* [1806].

My dear Lord Dalkeith,— . . . I understand you wish to know, for the information of my old friend and fellow-collegian Lord Selkirk, the circumstances which attended the dismission of the superfluous population who occupied the estates of the Border chieftains when they were converted into sheep-walks. There are particular difficulties which attend the investigation, and make it in a great measure obscure, compared to the history of the same change which has taken place in our own day in the Highlands.

The state of the Borders before the accession of James VI., and of the Highlands, strictly resemble each other with respect to internal circumstances. The patriarchal right or dominion of a Chieftain of a clan over those of the same name, and who were presumed to be of the same family with himself,—a right of dominion the most ancient in the world,—was acknowledged in both countries, while the authority exercised by the Lowland Scottish nobles and barons depended upon the feudal principle of superior and vassal, or upon that of landlord and tenant. This is proved by the Act of James VI.'s Parliament 1587, when a roll is made up of the clans in the Borders and Highlands who lived under the patriarchal dominion of the Captains and Chieftains,—"ofttimes," says the Statute, "against the will of their landlords, on whose grounds they live."

The change which took place at the Union of the Crowns upon the Border clans chiefly respected the crushing of this patriarchal or *clannish* authority, if I may so call it. There were also measures taken, and apparently very prudently, to remove from the country many of those fiery and unruly spirits who had hitherto been maintained by the Border chiefs to serve in their quarrels, and who had subsisted chiefly by spoil and depredation. Your Lordship's ancestor Walter, the first Earl of Buccleuch, formed a legion of these freebooters, who served under him in the Dutch wars against the Spaniard, from which probably few of them returned.

A whole clan (the Graems) were transported to Ireland by an order of James's Privy Council. Repeated and severe executions under the authority of the Earl of Dunbar thinned or dispersed the rest of the Border riders who had subsisted by depredation. But it would be a mistake to suppose that these changes (although unquestionably they drained off the more enterprising and warlike of the Borderers) had any immediate effect upon the population at large.

Sir William Scott of Harden, who wrote in the end of the seventeenth century an account of Roxburghshire, and who is the best possible authority, as the representative of a Border leader of great note, says that before the accession of James to the English Crown no rent was paid on the Border excepting man-service in war, and some little acknowledgment known by the name of heregeld, and other feudal prestations. Some change must very shortly have taken place in this respect, so soon as the safety of the country was so ascertained that the Laird had more need for money than for men.

But the change seems to have been very slow and gradual. The Borders were not, like the Highlands, surrounded by a country in a civilised state, whose stock and farmers were ready to rush in upon this change of manners, to fill the purses of the landlord and to empty the land of its ancient military tenants. On the contrary, the rest of Scotland was so poor, and its inhabitants so uninstructed in the art of farming to advantage—in short, the difference between the Borders and the interior was comparatively so small,—that I suspect no change of inhabitants took place at all, but that the descendants of the old *reivers*, or such of them as were reclaimed, beat their own swords and their fathers' into ploughshares, and sat down to do their best in cultivating their own country instead of plundering their neighbours.

Besides, as I have already mentioned, although the patriarchal power of the Chieftains was broken, those who were landed proprietors retained their feudal authority over their vassals and tenants. Neither was the seventeenth century so secure as to induce any one to increase his rent-roll at the risk of greatly diminishing his retainers. The frequent civil wars, and the unsettled state of the country must have greatly retarded the progress of those causes of depopulation which have operated with such rapidity in

the Highlands, where there was nothing to balance the landlords' natural desire, except the pride of some individuals and the compassion of others. It must also be considered that during the seventeenth century there was comparatively little of our Border country occupied by sheep-walks. Black cattle were in high estimation, and the number of hands necessary to attend this kind of stock is much more numerous than that requisite for sheep.

I do not therefore think that the Union of the Crowns, although it broke the warlike and turbulent spirit of the Borders, had any immediate effect on the extent of the population. But within eighty years after that event, the bond between chieftain and kinsman seems to have been much broken. To take the individual case of our own Clan, whose patriarchal notions seem to have been much diminished by the Duchess of Monmouth marrying and residing in England, Scott of Satchells, whose doggerel poetry contains sometimes a peep of manners, complains heavily of the alteration this had produced to the poor kinsfolk of the family:—

> "In England now the Duchess dwells,
> Which to her friends is a cursed fate,
> For if they famish, starve, or die,
> They cannot have a groat from that estate.
> The times of old are quite forgot—
> How inferior friends had still relief,
> And how the worthiest of the name
> Engaged themselves to hold up their chief," etc.

About this time, as appears from the writing of the same elegant poet, the sheep were universally introduced. Satchells served in the regiment which Buccleuch carried to Holland, and enlisted about 1627; he wrote his book in 1688, so he is tolerable traditional authority.

A cause which hastened the conversion of the Border into sheep-walks was the downfall of the small proprietors. Satchells names an hundred landed proprietors of the

name of Scott living on the Borders in 1688, in which he would hardly be mistaken. I think in the same tract of country we cannot now find ten.

Each of these persons maintained his little style, and had a few cottages round his old tower, whose inhabitants made a desperate effort to raise some corn by scratching up the banks of the stream which winded through their glen.[1] These are all gone, and their followers have disappeared along with them. I suppose it became more and more difficult for them, after the union of the Crowns, to keep the name and port of gentlemen; they fell into distress, sold their lands, and the farmers who succeeded them, and had rent to pay to those who bought the estates, got rid of the superfluous cottagers with all despatch. I have often heard my grandmother and other old people talk of the waefu' year when seven Lairds of the Forest (all Scotts) became bankrupt at once, but how or why I know not. The farmers, when they had got rid of the inactive retainers of the small properties, seem to have gone on for a long time reducing the number of people on their farms. The ruins of cottages about every farmhouse in the country show that this last cause of depopulation continued to operate till a very late period, and indeed within the memory of man. I could name many farms where the old people remember *twenty smoking chimneys*, and where there are now not two.

From all these considerations I am induced to think that the causes of depopulation on the Border, although quite the same with those in the Highlands, occurred gradually, and were insensible in their operation, while the singular circumstance of the Highlands retaining their ancient manners till the Lowlands had attained the highest pitch of civilisation, has occasioned their passing from a

[1] Compare Scott's descriptions of the farm of Haughhead and the tower of Westburn flat, in the early chapters of the *Black Dwarf*.

race of warriors into a handful of shepherds in the course of fifty years, a change not completely operated on the Borders within three times the period. In evidence of the last circumstance I forgot to mention that in the time of the late Duke of Douglas, the Jedwood Forest estate (now entirely a sheep-walk) was divided among sixty or seventy tenants, who were bound to furnish three armed men on horseback each, for their landlord's military service. This was within the memory of man, and Lord Douglas's tacks[1] will show it. I cannot but mention, though it has no immediate reference to your Lordship's inquiry, that there seems to be an alteration of management fast creeping into the sheep-farms. It is now found impossible to put a full stock of sheep upon the farm during the summer unless provision is made to assist them with food in winter. This can only be done by the turnip husbandry, and as that requires a great number of hands, the farmers who do not lie near a town or village are as anxious to have cottagers upon their estates as they were formerly desirous of banishing them; and this the more, as they find by experience that they are more regular, sober, and manageable than hired servants or labourers. In this way we may hope that our valleys will gradually be repeopled with a hardy and virtuous peasantry. As to our military propensities, and attachment to such of the ancient chiefs and landholders as have retained the ancient ideas towards their tenants, I think I know one estate on which the proprietor might for a brush raise at least three thousand men by the summons of his Baron officers. But in the general case the vulgar saying of "No longer pipe, no longer dance," applies to landlord and tenant, chieftain and clan, superior and vassal, and in short, to all the relations of mankind. Excuse this hurried and confused statement,—and I am ever, my dear Lord, your Lordship's most obedient and much obliged, WALTER SCOTT.

[1] The Scotch term for leases.

TO ADAM FERGUSON.[1]

EDINR. 16 *Dec.* 1806.
(*Given from our black table.*)

HAVING a few moments' time at our black table, and the Bart.,[2] in the abundance of his Parliamentary connections and friendships having promised to give me a *kiver*,[3] I think I cannot employ time or a frank better than by inquiring whether you have got rid of the unlucky typhus, which I hear from the valiant knight aforesaid has laid its claws upon you. I hate to hear any of my friends talk of a disorder by its scientific name; it is a sign it has taken a little hold of his mind, and that he has made further investigation about it than is consistent with the idea of its being a transient guest. I beg therefore that the typhus may as speedily as possible assume the more humble denomination of a feverish cold, unless you mean to be set down among the learned Lord Admiral's catalogue of scientific infirmities. You know our old friend Braxie[4] cut short one of Maconochie's learned queries about the vena cava, "Hout awa wi' your Macavas, Mr. Maconochie." Even so say I, "Hout awa wi' your Typhus, Mr. Secretary." When you shall have got quite stout, which I hope and trust will be by the time this reaches you, I will absolutely envy your situation in Jersey, where there must be so many things both curious and entertaining,—Claret in plenty for noonday and night, Nantz for discussion and a midnight chat, lithe French lasses with their black eyes and natural vivacity, scratching each other for the honour of dancing and flirting with Mr. Secretary. With what contempt you must recollect a nipperkin of whisky-punch, and the lang-trained frost-bitten dearies of your *ci-devant* friend Cardrona![5]

[1] Afterwards Sir Adam Ferguson, who was at this time secretary to the Governor of the Channel Islands, and stationed at St. Heliers, Jersey.

[2] William Clerk.

[3] Vide *Humphrey Clinker*, "Cover" or "Frank." See p, 91, *n.*

[4] Robert Macqueen of Braxfield, Lord Justice-Clerk.

[5] Mr Williamson of Cardrona, an elderly friend of Scott's, whose humours he celebrates in *Malachi Malagrowther*.

But instead of writing nonsense, you will expect no doubt that I should give you a little news from Auld Reekie. I presume you will be little edified or entertained by an extract from my new work, which is to be entitled "Clerk Scott's Decisions," and is to come out on cream-coloured, wire-wove paper, printed by Ballantyne, with a vignette to each number, the first to represent Hermand *rampant*, and Polkemmet *couchant*, and Bannatyne *dormant*.[1] I will therefore tell you concisely that the country gentlemen are cutting each others' throats about politics, while the blackguards of the town have more sensibly *done* an unfortunate porter[2] who was loaded with £6000 belonging to the British Linen Company, and was murdered in daylight at the head of the Bank Office close, and within twenty yards of their Secretary. He was most dexterously despatched with a single stab through the very heart, so that he died without a single groan, and the assassin escaped with his booty. I declare this story

[1] Three Judges of the Court of Session.

[2] William Begbie was the man's name, and his murderer was never discovered, but Scott has written on the margin of his copy of the Trial of Mackoull, Edinburgh, 8vo., 1822: "Circumstances have gone far to fix this cruel and mysterious crime on one——, a surgeon in Leith, respectably connected and married to the daughter of a worthy and substantial burgher of Edinburgh. . . . This lad was a profligate and spendthrift, who had exhausted his patrimony, and was in great necessity at the time of the murther. Soon afterwards he became possessed of money, paid his debts, and seemed to live well without any sensible addition of means. His discourse frequently turned on the murder of Begbie, and the story seemed to haunt him. I have been told that suspicion had approached him very nearly, when he committed suicide. The thing was then smothered, through respect to the feelings of his connections."

This crime must have made a great impression on Scott at the time, as many years after he was able to describe the weapon used by the murderer.

"The knife was a remarkable one, such as bread is sliced with, having a wooden handle; the blade was short, broad, and keenly tempered; it had the shop-mark of the person who sold it, and the shop grease was still upon it, so that it had never been used but for the fatal purpose. It had been prepared for the deed by grinding the extremity to a sharp point and double edge."

makes me grouze[1] whenever I think of it. The man is probably in the better ranks of life, from the precautions and *desperation* of the action,—very likely somebody on the verge of bankruptcy, that awful interval when the best men are apt to become flurried, and those who are naturally bad are quite desperate. If this be the case, he will probably never be discovered unless by some mere chance, as he will not, like a low ruffian, be either suspected from the quantity of the booty, or obliged to fly from his habitation.

I had but a lonely time at Ashestiel this year, and often wished we could see you and Bob[2] looming upon the Peebles road. Almost my only companion, if that is not too free a word for a great Lord of the Bedchamber, was our neighbour Lord Somerville. It is a pity to think how we, who were so inseparable in former days, are now squandered abroad and sequestered at home. Poor Edmonstone's[3] health is I fear irrecoverable, and what makes it more melancholy, if possible, his health—I mean his bodily health—seems, I understand, to gain ground as his mental faculties give way. I understand that there is a plan, certainly the most advantageous in his situation, that a pension equivalent to the salary of the Sheriffdom shall be settled on him and Mrs. E. for their joint lives, and then the Bart.[4] will I hope succeed to Bute.

Pray write to me soon, and let me know that you are well and happy. We very often think and talk of you, and it would make you too vain were I to tell you how much you are regretted here.

Charlotte sends you kindest remembrances. The Laird of Gilnockie has got short clothes, and promises to be a strapper.—Believe me ever yours affectionately,

Walter Scott.

[1] Groose or Gruze, *v.n.* To shudder.—*Jamieson.*

[2] Probably their friend Robert Shortreed.

[3] J. J. Edmonstone, Sheriff of Bute, one of the members of "the Club" of 1788. See *Journal*, ii. p. 314.

[4] *i.e.* William Clerk, previously noted p. 62.

FROM ADAM FERGUSON.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, ST. HELIERS, JERSEY,
4th March 1807.

MY DEAR WALTER,—I trust our friend the Bart. some time ago told you that I had had the great satisfaction of receiving your most welcome letter, and I can hardly believe the evidence of my own eyesight on looking at its date to find that two months have since elapsed. . . . The garrison consists of five regiments of the line, besides six of island militia, and whether it be that I view them through a very favourable medium, I think I never met with so many honest good fellows together before. I am every day more and more convinced that the military profession was my predestinated one. A cruel reflection no doubt arises that I should have lost so many of the prime years of my life in sauntering and idling about that vile Outer House. However, Optimism for ever. Whether I shall live to arrive at the rank of Field-officer time must show. Failing this consummation of all military happiness, and though the worst should come to the worst—that I be left adrift a half-pay captain—I think, with a very little farm on the banks of the Tweed between Peebles and Selkirk,[1] and a "*Petite*" with 5, or 6000 in hand to keep the pot tolerably well filled, with an occasional easy visit to my friend the Sheriff, I could pass my time very much to my liking. This plan may appear visionary to you so far as the bit is concerned, but between ourselves a *blessing may light unexpectedly* and the *ci-devant* scapegrace Linton[2] may live to be a warm Country Gentleman. I have left no room to tell you much about these islanders. . . . I get on very pleasantly with them. . . . I hear their little French *chansons* and give them Scotch airs in return.

[1] The same wish is expressed by Ferguson in a letter written to Scott a good many years later, from the lines of Torres Vedras, and it was realised when he took up his abode at Huntly Burn.

[2] Ferguson's nickname. See Lockhart's *Life*.

You can't conceive how much they were delighted with "Weel may we a' be." I happened one evening to be in tolerable voice, and gave it in my best style: they were much struck with the uncommon wild nature (not to say barbarity) of the air. Many a *souper* it has procured me, and ever since the Polts have grinned at me like so many Cheshire cats, to use the Bart.'s phrase. Dear Walter, take not revenge upon me for my long delay in answering yours, but when you happen to have an idle half-hour let me know what you are to be about this spring vacation. . . .—Your most affectionate friend,

Adam Ferguson.

TO ROBERT SURTEES.[1]

17 *Dec.* 1806.

I was much obliged and interested by your long and curious letter. You flatter me very much by pointing out to my attention the feuds of 1715 and '45.[2] The truth is that the subject has often and deeply interested me from my earliest youth. My great-grandfather was *out*, as the

[1] Robert Surtees of Mainsforth, author of a *History of Durham*, an accomplished scholar, whose acquaintance Scott made shortly after the publication of the *Minstrelsy*, and with whom he frequently corresponded on literary and antiquarian subjects. Their letters have already been printed in Surtees' *Life*; but the foregoing extract is given here because it contains what is probably an early reference to *Waverley*.

[2] If this suggestion was the immediate cause of Scott's directing his attention to the feuds of 1715 and 1745, it was a happy idea, and Surtees may almost be pardoned for the clever mystification which occasioned the introduction of the Elfin Knight, in *Marmion*. For a complete exposure of the hoax, see Mr. Andrew Lang's *Old Friends*, Appendix, pp. 197-203.

Mr. Surtees wrote to Scott on December 8th, 1806:—"It is in your power to do what no historian can, to bring us acquainted with the very men themselves; to place us on the scene of action, and to perpetuate for ever the characteristic traits of valour and generosity which must have distinguished the Highland Clans, assembled for the last time under their native chiefs. . . . At this distance of time, we may surely feel for the spirit and loyalty of the Clans, or admire Hamilton's Gladsmuir *Ode*, without entering into the depth of Jacobitism."

And again in 1810, when send-

phrase goes, in Dundee's wars and in 1715, and had nearly the honour to be hanged for his pains, had it not been for the interest of Duchess Anne of Buccleuch and Monmouth, to whom I have attempted *longo intervallo* to pay a debt of gratitude.

But besides this, my father, although a Borderer, transacted business for many Highland lairds, and particularly for one old man called Stuart of Invernahyle, who had been out both in 1715 and '45, and whose tales were the absolute delight of my childhood. I believe there never was a man who united the ardour of a soldier and tale-teller—a man of 'talk' as they call it in Gaelic—in such an excellent degree, and he was as fond of telling as I was of hearing. I became a valiant Jacobite at the age of 10 years, and ever since reason and reading came to my assistance I have never quite got rid of the impression which the gallantry of Prince Charles made on my imagination.

Certainly I will not renounce the idea of doing something to preserve these stories, and the memory of times and manners which, though existing as it were yesterday, have so strangely vanished from our eyes. Whether this will be best done by collecting the old tales, or by modernising them as subjects of legendary poetry, I have never very seriously considered, but your kind encouragement confirms me in the resolution that something I must do, and that speedily. Once more, dear sir, pray persevere with your kind intentions towards me, and do not let me lose the benefit your correspondence holds out to your most obliged humble servant, WALTER SCOTT.

ing Scott his beautiful Invocation to the Minstrel (see Ed. *Annual Register*, vol. iii. Pt. II. p. lxxxviii), he says, "You have never attended to my request in prose, and therefore on the other side you will find an incantation to induce you to write *La très piteuse et délectable histoire du preux et errant Chevalier, Charles Stuart.*"

CHAPTER III

1807

EDINBURGH AND ASHESTIEL

"Even now it scarcely seems a day,
Since first I tuned this idle lay;
A task so often thrown aside,
When leisure graver cares denied,
That now, November's dreary gale,
Whose voice inspired my opening tale,
That same November gale once more
Whirls the dry leaves on Yarrow shore."

Marmion.

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1807—AGE 36

At work on *Marmion* and *Dryden*.

Visits London in March—gathering materials for *Dryden*.

Visits Hampshire in April—at Gundimore, W. Stewart Rose's Cottage.

Visits Lichfield in May—Miss Seward.

Visits Dumfriesshire in July—Lord Abercorn's business.

Visits Lanarkshire in September.

Dryden and *Marmion* suspended by pressure of extra private official work, preparing for Secretaryship to Parliamentary Commission on Scotch Judicature.

Christmas at Bothwell Castle.

CHAPTER III.

TO MISS SEWARD.

EDINBURGH, 20 *February* 1807.

I TAKE an early opportunity to send you the promised specimen of my new poem, and at the same time to request your acceptance of a small volume of poetry written by one of our country shepherds, which, if you can wade through the Scotch, will repay you for the labour.[1]

If upon perusal you should like the poems, you would do me a great kindness to give the little volume that celebrity among your literary friends which you can so easily confer by your recommendation.

The author gives a most literal and very curious account of his life and studies in the preface, and is upon the whole a very interesting person. The success of his book is of some consequence to him, as it may assist him in starting a small farm which he has taken, and where he will probably succeed very well, as he is not only a good Ballad-writer, but a most excellent shepherd. I know nobody that understands the diseases of sheep so well, or faces the tempests more hardily. In short he is a very deserving character, and I am deeply interested in his fate now that he is about to emerge from his state of servitude.

I have at length fixed on the title of my new poem, which is to be christened, from the principal character, *Marmion or a Tale of Flodden Field.* There are to be

[1] *The Mountain Bard*, by James Hogg, had just been published at Edinburgh, by Scott's intervention.

six Cantos, and an introductory Epistle to each, in the style of that which I send to you as a specimen. In the legendary part of the work "Knights, Squires, and steeds shall enter on the stage." I am not at all afraid of my patriotism being a sufferer in the course of the tale. It is very true that my friend Leyden has said:

> "Alas! that Scottish maid should sing
> The combat where her lover fell,
> That Scottish Bard should wake the string
> The triumph of our foes to tell."[1]

But we may say with Francis I., "that at Flodden all was lost *but our honour*,"—an exception which includes everything that is desirable for a poet.

As to my editorial labours, for two years past I have been occasionally labouring on a complete edition of Dryden's Works, which have never been collected. I hope it will be out by Christmas next. The illustration of the poetical and historical passages has cost me much labour.

> From my research the boldest spiders fled
> And moths retreating trembled as I read.

As for poetry it is very little labour to me; indeed 'twere pity of my life should I spend much time on the light and loose sort of poetry which alone I can pretend to write. Were all the time I wasted upon the "Lay" put together,—for it was laid aside for long intervals,—I am sure it would not exceed six weeks. The last Canto was written in three forenoons, when I was lying in quarters with our yeomanry. I leave it with yourself to guess how little I can have it in my most distant imagination to place myself upon a level with the great Bards you have mentioned, the very latchets of whose shoes neither Southey nor I are worthy to unloose. My admiration of Chaucer, Spenser, and Dryden does not blind me to their

[1] "Ode on Visiting Flodden."

faults, for I see the coarseness of the first, the tediousness occasioned by the continued allegory of the second, and the inequalities of the last, but my dear Miss Seward, "in those days were giants in the land," and we are but dwarfs beside them.

I am infinitely obliged by your sending me your tribute to the memory of the immortal Garrick. How much I envy those who have seen that abridgement of all that was pleasant in man. But we have Siddons, though less extended in her range, yet not surely less excellent, and for what we have received let us be thankful in God's name. . . .

FROM WILLIAM STEWART ROSE.[1]

1807.

I CANNOT sufficiently express the sense I have of your partial regard in proposing to inscribe to me one of the books of your intended poem.

The impression made on me by such a lasting token of your friendship will, I am sure, be as permanent as it is strong.

Will you forgive me for having read the specimen you sent me to Lady Hester Stanhope?[2] I will not tell you all the flattering speeches which it produced, because you shall hear them from her own mouth; but it will, I am sure, be a gratification to you to hear that Mr. Pitt (she repeated some of his remarks upon the "Lay") highly

[1] W. S. Rose, son of the Right Hon. George Rose, Treasurer of the Navy, etc. etc., to whom Scott dedicated the first canto of *Marmion*. Mr. Rose died in 1843, and is most widely known by his translation of Ariosto's *Orlando*.

[2] Scott was in London in March, and he remained there several weeks engaged at the British Museum on *Dryden*; thence he visited his friend at Gundimore in Hampshire. He had then resumed *Marmion*, and left his host the printed sheets of the exquisite Introduction to the 1st Canto, which Rose refers to as having been shown to Lady Hester Stanhope. On his return home Scott was compelled to put aside all literary work, and devote himself entirely to the disentanglement of his brother Thomas's affairs.

appreciated both the talents and the merit which your poetry exhibits.

This is not in order to qualify some criticisms which I am about to venture upon the lines which produced this discussion. . . .

Having very seriously told you my opinion, which is perhaps little worth upon these heads, you will I trust believe me equally sincere in saying that I was delighted with the verses, which evidently flowed from the heart.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINBURGH, 15*th May* 1807.

. . . I HAD a most stormy passage to Scotland, for the tempest of disputed election was raging in every town almost through which I passed. Post horses were, generally speaking, out of the question, and the public coaches, on the outside and in the inside of which I performed the greater part of my journey, were crowded with drunken voters whom the candidates were transporting in that manner through the country, and who drank brandy at every furlong for the good of their country. I arrived here on Wednesday without having been in bed for three nights, but without experiencing either fatigue or inconvenience from my vigils.

The cry of King and Constitution was the favourite through every part of the country I passed. My route extended a good way to the westward, by Liverpool, Lichfield,[1] Sheffield, etc., till I joined the great north road at

[1] Though Miss Seward's description of Scott when he visited Lichfield has been already printed, yet it is so good that space may well be afforded for it here, transcribed from the original MS. :—

LICHFIELD, *May* 10*th*, 1807.

. . . This proudest boast of the Caledonian Muses is tall and rather robust than slender; but lame in the same manner as Mr. Hayley, and in a greater measure. Neither the contour of his face nor yet his features are elegant, his complexion healthy and somewhat fair, without bloom. We find the singularity of brown hair and eyelashes with flaxen eyebrows, and a countenance

York, finding it difficult to return, as I had intended, by Carlisle. . . . I found all my little people in great health and spirits, and beginning to talk a little French under their mother's instructions. I am very anxious that my sons in particular shall be masters of the modern European languages, an accomplishment which, although much neglected in our common mode of education, may be of the utmost use to them in future life. Your Ladyship will, I hope, commend my early and fore-casting prudence in this matter when you consider that the eldest boy is only five years old, and the youngest cannot speak his mother tongue yet.

I find myself treated with an unusual degree of respect in this country, from the idea which the good people are pleased to entertain of my favour with the ministers and their strongest supporters. As the only course in my power, I look wise, say nothing, and gain the credit of being in the secret, and knowing how to keep it. I need not tell your Ladyship that I laugh in my sleeve, and yet I daresay I have often looked up with profound respect to some person or other who had no better claim to it than being personally known to his betters, like myself.

You will expect to hear something of *Marmion*. He

open, ingenuous, and benevolent. When seriously conversing or earnestly attentive, tho' his eyes are rather of a lightish grey, deep thought is on their lids; he contracts his brows, and the rays of genius gleam aslant from the orbs beneath them. An upper lip too long prevents his mouth from being decidedly handsome, but the sweetest emanations of temper and of heart play about it when he talks cheerfully or smiles, and in company he is much oftener gay than contemplative. His conversation an overflowing fountain of brilliant wit, apposite allusion and playful archness, while on serious themes it is nervous and eloquent; the accent decidedly Scotch, yet by no means *broad*. On the whole, no expectation is disappointed which his poetry must excite in all who feel the powers and the graces of Aonian inspiration. Not less astonishing than was *Johnson's* memory is that of Mr. Scott; like Johnson's also, his recitation is too monotonous and violent to do justice either to his own writings or those of others.—Letter to Cary.

begs his respectful compliments to the Marchioness, and will have the honour of kissing her hand at Christmas, having adjourned his introduction to public life till that period. The whirlpool of politics run such risque of absorbing all the public interest, and my own labours have been so effectually interrupted by the gaieties of your metropolis, that this arrangement will be most convenient for both parties.

I send Queen Auragua[1] under the Marquis's cover, and will be happy to hear how your Ladyship likes it in Manuscript; and still more so, to know that you are tolerably well, and taking care of your health, to which London air and London hours are I fear not very favourable.

TO MISS SEWARD.

Ashestiel, by Selkirk,
August 11, 1807.

I very little anticipated upon quitting your hospitable mansion, that my first letter should have begun with an apology for delaying to express the pleasure I had received from a personal acquaintance which I value so highly. But it has pleased God since that period to visit me with distress of a kind which, least of all, I am able to bear.

My younger brother's affairs fell very suddenly into total and irretrievable disorder, at a time too when his wife was confined after the birth of a son, and under a variety of other circumstances tending to aggravate a calamity in itself sufficiently severe. He had been for many years manager of the estates of the Marquis of Abercorn, and I was security to his employer for the regular payment of his rents. The consequence of my brother's failure was, that the whole affairs of these extensive estates were thrown upon my hands in a state of unutterable confusion, so that to save myself from ruin I was obliged to lend my

[1] Southey's Poem on Queen Orraca.

constant and unremitting attention to their re-establishment. In the course of this unfortunate business, I was so absolutely worried to death that I had neither head nor heart to think of anything else. Fortunately, from Lord Abercorn's friendship and liberality of sentiment on the one hand, and unceasing attention on the other, I have put things into such a train as to avoid a personal loss, which would not only have deprived me of the power of assisting my brother's family, but very much cramped me in maintaining my own, or deprived me at least of that independence which in my opinion is essential to happiness. Thank God everything has turned out better than I ventured to hope, and I have found myself at liberty to escape to the banks of my dear Tweed without any apprehension of being obliged to quit them. I have also hopes, by some kind and powerful friends, to establish my brother in a line which will suit him better than that in which he has met with his misfortune.

If this can be accomplished, his youth and talents, which are very considerable, may easily repair to himself and his family the disaster which his ill-timed speculations have occasioned. Meantime, I have found the proof of an old Scottish proverb that "if a thing is kept for seven years, some use will be found for it." After so many years spent at the Bar and in literary pursuits, I never thought to have been so much obliged to an early part of my education, in which I was trained to what you would call Attorney's business, which my father thought I ought to understand, although my practice was to be in the higher and theoretical branch of the law. This has done me yeoman's service in the hour of necessity, but most devoutly do I pray I may have no further occasion to plague myself with rent rolls, annuity tables, purchase and redemption of leases, and all the endless train of complicated chicanery by understanding which one part of

mankind enable themselves to live at the expense of the sons of fortune.

In the midst of all this bustle, it is scarcely necessary to say that my harp has been hung on the willows; my grand poem called *Marmion* has been entirely stopped, even when half finished, and *Dryden* has crept on very slowly. All this delay must now be compensated when leisure and renovated spirits enable me to resume my literary labours. Since I came here I have had a visit from Miss Smith of Covent Garden Theatre, an actress of the Tragic Muse, for whom I have an especial regard as a very good and pleasing girl with high talents for her profession, in which she is now second to Mrs. Siddons alone. As she goes by the Western Road, I would have ventured to give her a few lines of introduction to you had her time been such as to permit her to wait upon you. She is quite received everywhere, and was introduced to us by the Buccleuch ladies.

TO MISS SMITH.[1]

ASHESTIEL, *9th September* 1807.

. . . I ASSURE you we felt a little pang of remorse when we considered that the day you so kindly spent at our farm, had been the means of reducing you to the necessity of such violent exertions to be in due time at Margate. Seriously, you must allow no consideration to do so in future; the voice (especially so flexible a voice as yours) has a delicacy equal to its other powers, and a bad cold might deprive it for a long time, if not for ever, of that command of tone which it now possesses. So pray as you value my regard, take care of damp dressing-rooms, and of night journeys. I am not ignorant that your profession

[1] Miss Sarah Smith, an accomplished tragic actress, engaged at this time at Covent Garden. She married in 1814 George Bartley, and died in 1850.

and the eminence you have deservedly gained in it, expose you to sensations still more painful than those of colds and rheumatisms, and that the heartache which is produced by lacerated feelings is more acute than the severest bodily pain. But you must look, my dear young friend, upon the livelier side of the picture, and consider the pleasures of your profession, when its highest rank is attained by one who is in every respect deserving of the elevation it gives her. . . .

The actor gives life to the poet, and embodies those passions which the author can but sketch; and the ardour with which a favourite part is studied and mastered seldom fails in the keenest degree to reward a performer who has given himself the pains to understand it. Every line of life has its advantages, and usually is balanced with drawbacks of a nature corresponding to them. The performer whose enjoyment lies in exquisitely feeling and expressing the beauties of poetry, is by the acuteness of feeling which he must cultivate, rendered doubly sensible to mental distress; and as he lives by the applause of the public, he is liable to be wounded by all the tales of calumny and malice to which the public is always too willing to lend an ear. But your powers, with the good temper and propriety to which they are united, may safely defy all these inconveniences, and if you cannot avoid feeling them for a time, you have the pleasing consciousness that they arise only from a sense of your excellence. . . . Believe me yours affectionately, WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.[1]

ASHESTIEL, 10 *Sept.* 1807.

I HAVE deferred writing from day to day, my dear Lady

[1] Scott appears to have hinted to Lady Abercorn that he feared her silence was caused by the unpleasant business in which he had been engaged during the summer months, but her reply, from which

Abercorn, until I should be able to make good my promise of sending you the first two cantos of *Marmion*. . . .

I am sure it will give your kindness pleasure to hear that the very unpleasant affair which distressed me so much when I met your Ladyship at Longtown is taking a turn much more favourable than I had ventured to augur at that time. Lord Abercorn will, I think, sustain no loss whatever, my own will be trifling, and something will even be saved out of the wreck of my brother's fortune.

. . . Thus it is, my dear Lady, in human life: the bad is not always so *very* bad, and the good is not always so *very* good as we at first fear or expect, and in this twilight sort of state, in which good and bad fortune are so strangely chequered, we find something to make misfortune tolerable, and something to embitter prosperity itself.

Apropos of prosperity, our glens have been honoured with a visit from the Duke and Duchess of Bedford; they made some stay at a shooting hut of Lord Somerville's (how he contrived to pack them I cannot imagine), and looked around them at the Antiquities and Agriculture of Teviotdale. I renewed my former acquaintance with her Grace, which commenced when she was the Duchess's *Georgie*,[1] and they breakfasted at our farm on their road to

the following extract is made, shewed him that he was mistaken:—

"I am sure you have not for one moment imagined my silence proceeded from any change in those sentiments which I always have felt and always must feel for you—but as I have no good excuse to give for my silence I will trust to you for forgiveness . . . You must prove you are not angry by writing me long letters to Ireland, where we intend to be very soon, please God. We leave this on the 27th, and travel with our own horses by Scotland, so we shall be a great while on the road. . . . How happy I should be if we could tempt you to cross the sea and come to us—indeed it would be a most friendly visit tho' one I fear there is little chance of."

[1] Second wife of John, Duke of Bedford, daughter of the 4th Duke of Gordon and the celebrated Duchess Jane.

Hamilton. . . . I have seldom seen any person so happy at revisiting her native country. She was quite ready, with the damsel in the old song,

> "To throw off her gallant shoes
> Made of the Spanish leather,
> And to put on the Highland brogues
> To skip among the heather."

Marmion has been sadly interrupted, but is now making some progress. I was under the necessity of going to Edinburgh for a few days, and as Mrs. Scott was with me, we returned by Bothwell Castle, both to visit Lady Douglas and that my wife might see the Falls of Clyde. But the pleasure of this excursion had like to have cost us dear. For on Sunday, as we were travelling through a very wild country between the towns of Lanark and Peebles, the weather, which had been rainy for several days, became a perfect hurricane. Many bridges were broke down, others were left standing with the water flowing round both ends of them, so that they seemed in the middle of a lake; at other places the road was entirely under water. Going forward and stopping seemed to be almost alike impossible. However, by walking, wading, and riding before the carriage when we came to those perilous spots where my coachman could not see the road, we did at length, to the astonishment of all beholders, reach the town of Peebles, which was half under water. Next day, all the roads being impassable for a carriage, we had to walk home, being about eight miles intersected by brooks, and had on our arrival the displeasure to find a good part of my crop had been carried off by the river, which very nearly made free with the persons of some people who had made themselves busy in saving it.

But as I remember formerly terrifying your Ladyship with the description of a Scottish tornado, I will not enlarge upon this tempest, lest I should make you afraid

of a country which I have so many reasons to wish you to love. I learned by a letter from Lord Abercorn that you had reached in safety "the green isle of the ocean," whose verdure and riches have, I daresay, long since obliterated the recollection of the dusky heaths and mountains which you traversed in journeying to Portpatrick. . . .

TO THE SAME.

ASHESTIEL, *Sept.* 19, 1807.

. . . I AM going on with *horse* and *foot*, that is, *prose* and *verse* alternately. *Marmion* is now well advanced. Pray observe that in the character of Fox two lines are omitted; they should follow that which says,

"Lest it should drop o'er Fox's tomb."

They run thus—

"For talents mourn untimely lost,
When best employed and wanted most,
Mourn genius gone," etc.

Pray, Lady Abercorn, add these lines with a pen, They are an admirable improvement suggested by the M[arquis] when I was at the Priory. The sheet was thrown off before the correction reached the printer, but the leaf is to be cancelled and printed anew before publication.

I see my neighbour Lord Somerville's carriage on the opposite side of the Tweed. I suppose he is coming to spend the day with us, so conclude in haste. . . .—Your truly grateful and deeply obliged WALTER SCOTT.

TO MISS SEWARD.

23 *Nov.* 1807.

. . . As for the affair of Copenhagen,[1] I know you will ascribe to my ancient freebooting Border prejudices a

[1] The bombardment of Copenhagen and capture of the Danish Fleet in September.

latitude of morality which I think State necessity must justify, because in the code of nations as in that of social order, the law of self-preservation must supersede all others. Indeed, my patriotism is so much stronger than my general philanthropy, that I should hear with much more composure of a general conflagration at Constantinople, than of a hut being on fire at Lichfield; and as for the morality of an action in which the welfare of the country is deeply concerned, I suspect I feel much like the Laird of Keir's butler. Keir had been engaged in the affair of 1715 and was tried for high treason; the butler, whose evidence was essential to conviction, chose to forget all that was unfavourable to his master, who was acquitted, of course. As they returned home Keir could not help making some observations upon the violent fit of oblivion with which John had been visited, but that trusty domestic answered with infinite composure, that he chose rather to trust his own soul in the Lord's hands than his Honour's life in the hands of the Whigs.

But if I write any longer in this way you will lock up your Plate, as old Lady Tarras[1] threatened to secure her cows when I should visit her, suspecting that my distinctions between *meum* and *tuum* were hardly more accurate than those of Johnie Armstrong of Gilnockie.

I am very glad indeed that you have condescended to take upon you the task of reviewing my poor Shepherd.[2] This dismal day of wind and snow is probably finding him a very different occupation from writing verses. A sailor when he hears the wind whistle always thinks of a sea

[1] This letter is printed from a transcript, and not from the original by Sir Walter. If he wrote *Tarras*, it may have been a playful allusion to his old friend and early patroness Lady Diana Scott, of whom he often speaks in terms of the utmost regard. Helen Hepburn, the only Lady Tarras, died when Scott was a child.

[2] *The Mountain Bard* by Hogg was reviewed by Miss Seward in the *Critical Review* in 1807.

tempest, and such a night as last always sends my thoughts to the desert hills, where my poor countrymen must be all night driving the sheep with their faces to the wind, to prevent their lying down and being smothered. In this service they very often lose their lives.

I do not at all like the task of reviewing, and have seldom myself undertaken it; in Poetry never, because I am sensible there is a greater difference of tastes in that department than in any other, and that there is much excellent Poetry which I am not now-a-days able to read without falling asleep, and which would nevertheless have given me great pleasure at an earlier period of my life. Now I think there is something hard in blaming the poor cook for the fault of our own palate or deficiency of appetite. There is a clever little Pamphlet come out against Jeffrey by Mr Coplestone[1] of Oxford! I gave it to the Critic this morning, and he is so much delighted with it that he says he means to request the favour of the Author's contributions to his Review. To be sure he is the most complete *poco curante* that I ever knew. . . . I have resumed my poem in order to accomplish my engagement with the Booksellers, which has been terribly retarded. . . . I am a pretty hard worker when once I set about it, and, in fact, my literary life resembles the natural life of a savage, absolute indolence interchanged with hard work. This is the interval of labour, to which the gloomy weather and whistling winds are very favourable. . . . My reason for transporting *Marmion* from Lichfield was to make good the minstrel prophecy of Constance's song. Why I should ever have taken him there I cannot very well say. Attachment to the place, its locality with respect to Tamworth, the ancient seat of the Marmions, partly perhaps the whim of taking a slap at Lord Brooke *en passant*, joined in

[1] "Hints to young Reviewers" by Edward Coplestone, afterwards Bishop of Llandaff.

suggesting the idea which I had not time to bring out or finish. . . . I am quite glad you have seen Southey. Delighted with him you must be, yet in conversation (great as he is) he is inferior to Wordsworth, perhaps because he is a deeper and more elaborate scholar. Southey rarely allows you any of those reposes of conversation when you are at liberty to speak, as the phrase is, "whatever comes uppermost." But in return, if an idle fellow like me is sometimes a little *gêné*, he is at least informed, and may be the wiser or the better from all he hears. What I admire in both is an upright undeviating morality connecting itself with all they think and say and write. . . .

FROM LADY LOUISA STUART.[1]

BOTHWELL CASTLE, *Wednesday.*

I WILL write to Mr. Morritt, who told me the story and is a friend of Lord Mulcaster's, for a particular detail. In the meantime what I can remember is this. Mulcaster Castle lies beyond Wast Water, the wildest and most remote lake in Cumberland. It commands a fine view of the sea, and is in a scene of savage grandeur.

The *Penningtons*, one of the oldest families in the County, have possessed it for many centuries; I think—but am not sure—I was told they had it before the Conquest. Colonel Pennington, the present owner, was made an Irish Peer by the title of Lord Mulcaster several years ago. Here Henry VI. found an asylum when flying from the Yorkists, and remained some months inhabiting a part of the Castle still known by the name of "the King's

[1] Lady Louisa Stuart, to whom Scott wrote some of his best letters, was the youngest daughter of John, 4th Earl of Bute. Her own letters show that she had much of the genius of her grandmother, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Scott first met her at Dalkeith, and then at Bothwell, the seat of Archibald Lord Douglas, whose wife, Lady Frances Scott, daughter of Henry Duke of Buccleuch, was also one of Scott's dearest friends.

Lady Louisa Stuart survived all her early friends, dying in 1851 at the age of 94.

Apartment." When going away he lamented that his poverty allowed of no suitable gift to his kind host, the Pennington of that day, but said he would leave them the glass out of which he commonly drank; then formally blessed it, and prayed that while that glass remained unbroken, the house of Mulcaster might never want a male heir. It has ever since been called the "Luck of Mulcaster." It is a goblet of thick Venice glass.[1]

The neighbouring peasantry have such a veneration for it, that on some day of feasting when they assembled at the Castle, and Lord Mulcaster brought it out to show it them, many fell upon their knees. This is all I can recollect at present, but perhaps Mr. Morritt may give me some more particulars.

We are very happy that you give us some hopes of seeing you, in spite of *Dryden* and *Marmion*, neither of which we wish delayed, especially the latter.—I am, dear sir, your most obedient L. STUART.

P.S.—I am half afraid I have blundered in the name, for the Red Book calls him Muncaster with an *n*, and he is now member for Westmoreland, which looks as if he belonged to that County. The cup, of which I told you the history, is a shallow drinking glass, not unlike the ancient Patera in shape, and ornamented with gilding round the edge. I don't know the name of the knight of Pennington who entertained Henry VI.[2]

TO LADY LOUISA STUART.

I SHOULD not have laboured so long under the charge of ingratitude, much worse than that of witchcraft (which a ghost ballad writer is naturally subjected to), if I had

[1] Lord Muncaster writes, June 1892:—

". . . This cup is still unbroken. I have always heard that we have been baptized out of it. I have carried it at one baptism, and it is now in my strong-room. . . ."

[2] Sir John de Pennington was King Henry's host.

not hoped to have a personal opportunity of paying my acknowledgments for Lady Louisa's kindness. I take great care of your correspondent's curious letter; as I shall be within twelve miles of Bothwell on the 30th, if Lady Douglas spends the Christmas there, I will have the honour to deliver it upon that day. My errand at Glasgow is to see the Lord Advocate[1] installed as Lord Rector in the University; but if the family are to be at Bothwell I will leave him when invested with his dignity.

I am more and more delighted with the tale of King Henry, his cup, and his blessing, but I will not willingly allow that our good Scotch King meant to betray him. You remember the lines of Chapelain[2] on the succour he received in Scotland, "ever kind to banished princes, though so rude a country." I forget the French words but that I think is the meaning, which recurred strongly to my mind when I saw Monsieur come to our old Abbey.[3] I am going to discontinue all my dangerous intentions of giving poetic celebrity to Lord Muncaster's habitation (since you were pleased to think I can do so), for I think the story is far too good to be comprised in a stanza and a note, which is all I can afford in *Marmion*. Besides, the making it public would be giving the signal to build some vile milk-and-waterish legendary tale upon so beautiful a subject, which would grieve me as deeply as it would Lord M. to see a trim, neat, whitewashed, Gothic castle, almost as large as one of his ancestors' goose pyes, arise upon the most romantic knoll in the environs of Pennington, with its usual graces of slits and pigeon holes for loop holes and embrasures, petticoat flounces for

[1] Lord Advocate Colquhoun's installation took place on December 29, 1807.

[2] Should this not read Chastelain or Molinet, whose lines on Scotland

> De tous siècles le mendre
> Et le plus tollerant—

are quoted by Scott in *Edinburgh Review*, vol. iii. p. 450, or *Miscellaneous Works*, xvii. pp. 76-7.—Godwin's *Chaucer*.

[3] Count d'Artois, — afterwards Charles x.—at Holyrood.

parapets, battled and embattled pepper boxes for turrets, and old perspective glasses for watch towers. I therefore intend to lay by the tradition in lavender till some occasion when I can give it its full interest, or at least do my best to give it as much as I can. I am just now very busy dressing your cousin James IV. in his court suit; his clothes are all cut, sew'd and ready to put on, so I must bid your Ladyship farewell in order to attend his royal levée.—I am ever with great respect your Ladyship's most respectful and obliged humble servant, W. S.

FROM LADY LOUISA STUART.

Bothwell Castle,
Thursday, *Dec.* 1807.

Lady Douglas desires me to say that Lord D. and she will be most happy to see you when you have *rectified* the Lord Advocate.

They are quite stationed here, and have no thought of moving from home, nor I of leaving them, for some weeks to come.

I am almost sorry that the Knight of Muncaster is not to appear at Flodden with *the Luck thereof* upon his shield, tho' very glad that he has a chance of a whole poem to his own share. As for our *Gude faith*, I am afraid in spite of Chapelain it has not always been so notorious as you would have it. Remember Charles the First, sold to the Parliament, and "the brave Percie" given up by Morton notwithstanding the warnings of the "Witch Ladie."[1] I have time for no more, some company being just going away, whom I must join the family in civilizing, as a very fine-spoken lady once expressed it.—Ever, Dear Sir, your most obedient, L. Stuart.

[1] See Ballad *Northumberland Betrayed*, in "Percy's Reliques," for an account of the Witch Lady, who in Lochleven through the weme of her gold finger ring shewed the page of the fugitive Earl his master's foes waiting for him at Berwick "fifty miles away."

CHAPTER IV

1808

EDINBURGH AND ASHESTIEL

Then would he sing achievements high,
And circumstance of Chivalry,
Till the rapt traveller would stay
Forgetful of the closing day;
And noble youths the strain to hear
Forsook the hunting of the deer;
And Yarrow as he rolled along
Bore burden to the Minstrel's song.

Lay of the Last Minstrel.

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1808—AGE 37

Marmion published Feby. 1808 in 4to, by Constable, Edinburgh.

Dryden's Works in 18 vols. 8vo, April, published by Miller, London.

Joanna Baillie visits Scott in Edinburgh and at Ashestiel.

Scott visits Loch Katrine in June with Mrs. Scott and Miss Lydia White.

Morritt visits Scott in June.

Heber and Murray at Ashestiel in October (Foundation of the *Quarterly Review*.)

Strutt's Queenhoo Hall, 4 vols. 12mo, published by Murray, London.

Carleton's Memoirs, 8vo, published by Constable.

Cary's Memoir, 8vo, published by Constable, Edinburgh.

Somers' Tracts commenced, 13 vols. 4to, completed in 1812, and published by Miller, London.

Rupture with Constable and partnership with John Ballantyne as a Publisher, December.

CHAPTER IV.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINBURGH, 22*d January* 1808.

DEAR LADY MARCHIONESS,—I have at length got a copy of Burns's *Love Letters to Clarinda*, the little publication which I mentioned to your Ladyship at Dumfries. It is rather too heavy for an ordinary frank.[1] I have therefore addressed it under cover to Lord Castlereagh, who will I presume take care of it for your Ladyship. I mentioned the circumstances which attended this publication, but as they are rather curious, I venture to remind you that *Clarinda* was in the *work-day world* a Mrs. Meiklehose (in English Mrs. Great-stockings). Her husband was in the West Indies when she became acquainted with Burns in the dawn of his celebrity. The progress and extent of their

[1] Franking was a privilege which, till the introduction of the Penny Postage in 1840, the members of both Houses of Parliament, Government officials, and other public functionaries enjoyed, of sending and receiving daily a certain number of letters post free, their signature or address on a letter being sufficient to exempt it from postage. The postal charges were then so high that they were evaded on all hands, and the privilege of franking was much abused in favour of private friends, literary men, and even mercantile houses. *E.g.* Dr. Lardner stated before a Committee that his correspondence with reference to his various publications, and to engineering matters on which he was consulted, was carried on principally by official franks. The number of franked missives was about seven millions yearly, and as official franks carried any weight, bundles of letters for the same neighbourhood were often enclosed in them; and it was calculated that in 1838 a single mail-coach out of the two dozen leaving London each night could have carried all the chargeable letters. The privilege was abolished in 1840.

acquaintance may perhaps be guessed from the letters, which form the most extraordinary mixture of sense and nonsense, and of love human and divine, that was ever exposed to the eye of the world, not excepting the celebrated familiar epistles of Mr. Robert Ferguson to Lady Elgin. As Mrs. Meiklehose advanced in years her vanity became rather too strong for her discretion, and confiding in the charity of her confidants, and in her own character as a sort of *dévote*, she thought fit to show this correspondence to particular friends, and at length to a faithless young divine, who sat up all night to make copies, put himself into the Glasgow mail-coach with peep of day, and sold all the amatory effusions of Sylvander and Clarinda to a Glasgow bookseller for the moderate sum of ten guineas. To the great horror of poor Clarinda, and the absolute confusion of all the godly in Edinburgh, forth came a sixpenny pamphlet containing all these precious productions. The Heroine of the piece being respectably connected, the book was suppressed, partly by threatening and partly by bribing the bookseller, and now, although they have put a Belfast title upon the work,[1] it is very hard to procure a copy, as your Ladyship may easily believe since it is so long since I could find you a copy. I shall grieve if this miscarries, because it might be difficult to replace it; but I hope it will be more fortunate than the sheets sent to you when in Ireland. But as L[d] C. will receive the parcel at the same time you have this note, there can be no chance of a second mishap of the kind.

I am asking myself if you are at the Priory or in St. James's Square. In one or other place I think it not unlikely that you may see the Minstrel in the course of a

[1] Bibliographies of Burns give 1802 as the date of the Glasgow edition and 1806 for that of Belfast. A complete edition, with memoir of *Clarinda*, was published in Edinburgh in 1843

few weeks, as Lord Advocate seems disposed to insist that I shall take a corner of his post-chaise to London, which removes a certain weighty objection to the journey. I have finished *Marmion*, and your Ladyship will do me the honour, I hope, to accept a copy very soon. In the sixth and last Canto I have succeeded better than I had ventured to hope, for I had a battle to fight, and I dread hard blows almost as much in poetry as in common life. —I am ever, with great respect and attachment, your Ladyship's most obedient, very faithful W. S.

TO THE SAME.

5th February 1808.

. . . A CIRCUMSTANCE has just happened within the common order of things which I believe will enable his Lordship [Lord Melville] to carry his good wishes in some degree into effect. We Clerks of Session were Clerks of the Scottish Parliament, and as such our predecessors always claimed a right that the Secretary or Clerk to any Commission of Parliament which might sit in Scotland should be named out of their number.[1] It is probably not unknown to your Ladyship that Lord Eldon has brought in a Bill for making great alterations in our forms of jurisprudence, and that a Commission consisting of all our high Law Officers and several of those of England are to be named to carry this into effect. This Commission must have a Secretary well acquainted with our law and law forms, and my brethren at the Clerks' table, without solicitation or the slightest hint on my part, have to my great surprise made an application to Lord Melville stating their claim to have this officer named out of their number, and

[1] This letter refers to the Scottish Judicature Commission. Scott was appointed Secretary, and the Commission gave in its Report early in 1810.

recommending unanimously that I should be the person so appointed. . . . The Chancellor will receive a Memorial on the subject.

I am glad Lord Claud[1] is gone to the Brazils; he will see a most interesting and curious experiment[2] in politics —the transplantation of a whole royal family to a foreign colony; and we will have a chance of hearing some distinct account of the success of this most extraordinary migration. If we lived in any other age, what should we have said, written, and thought of the emigration of the House of Braganza? but we are turned as callous to wonders as Macbeth to horrors. This Commission affair (if it succeeds) will bring me to town very soon indeed. Meanwhile I am, with great regard and a deep sense of your kindness, your very grateful and obliged W. S.

TO CHARLES CARPENTER.

Edinburgh, *Feby. 8th*, 1808.

My dear brother,—Referring you to a fuller letter, which I have written along with a copy of a new book[3] which I hope Mrs. Carpenter will accept as kindly as she did my last, I send this by a young cousin just setting sail as a Cadet for Madras. He is a brother of that Russell whom I formerly recommended to you (but I think you never met), and is a very good boy; if it fall in your way to shew him any kindness or attention I am sure you will

[1] Lord Claud Hamilton, son of the Marquis of Abercorn; died in 1808.

[2] The results of this "experiment" after 80 years' trial may be briefly told:—When the Royal Family of Portugal emigrated to their Great South American possession they called it a 'Kingdom,' until 1822, when it was styled 'an Empire,' and this title remained until 1889-90, when by a revolution the amiable and accomplished Pedro II. was dethroned, and a republic established under the name of The United States of Brazil.

[3] *Marmion.*

do so; his mother was my Aunt,[1] and we have always been good friends.

I am truly happy that Mrs. Carpenter's health has not compelled that separation which your last letter threatened. I hope and trust she will be able to remain with you till circumstances enable you to leave India for good. Believe me, I often think of you and all your kindness to Charlotte. It will give you pleasure to learn that we are going on very well. My last step was to become one of the Clerks of Session; in doing so I renounced my practice at the Bar, and what is worse, as I entered by the resignation of an old and worthy predecessor, he retains his salary during his life. This bargain was made when I saw the administration going to pieces after poor Pitt's death, and knew how little I had to expect from those who came into power after that calamitous event.

To be sure I could not expect the change of Ministry which took place immediately afterwards, nor though I arrived in London the very day it happened[2] could I easily believe my eyes and ears. As I had (contrary to many who held the same political opinions in sunshine) held fast my integrity during the Foxites' interval of power, I found myself of course very well with the present administration. The present President of the Board of Control in particular is my early and intimate friend since we carried our satchels together to the High School of Edinburgh. Think, my dear Carpenter, if this can be of any use to you. I am sure Robt. Dundas would like to serve my brother. I am also very well acquainted with your present Governor-General Lord Minto, though I believe he was angry with me for not *ratting* (as the phrase is) with others, after Pitt's

[1] Mrs. Russell of Ashestiel.

[2] The administration under Lord Grenville lasted from February 1806 to March 1807, when it was succeeded by the Duke of Portland's which included Scott's friends Canning and Dundas.

death. Yet I think I have some influence with him; at least I am sure I deserve it, for when he set his son in opposition to the Duke of Buccleuch, my chieftain and friend, in Roxburgh, I could have done him more harm than I did. If you see him and choose to mention our close friendship and connections, I am sure you will not be the worse received. There is just now proposed a high Commission of Parliament for the reformation of some points of our Scotch law, and I have been pointed out by my friends to be Secretary to it—a post of considerable difficulty as well as distinction, but which if well discharged will pave the way to good appointments.

The public has been also very favourable to me, so that I have profited both in pecuniary respects and in general esteem by the literary reputation I have acquired. All this good fortune has not been without some alloy. Adieu, dear Carpenter; think if the little sunshine I have ever can be of use to you, though not essentially, yet in any trifling degree. I am sure we have always shared in yours. My little infantry, now four (two of each kind), are all well; your godson Charles a cherry-cheeked animal of two years old.—Believe me ever yours affectionately,

Walter Scott.

TO SOUTHEY.

26th February 1808.

. . . I have requested John Murray to send a copy of my new poem *Marmion*, a goodly volume in point of size, but I had not time to write the poem shorter.

Looking over *Madoc* the other day I found I had committed a piracy, unconsciously, upon an idea of yours. In a description of a distant view of a battle I have mentioned the

> "Plumed crests of chieftains brave
> Floating like foam upon the wave,"

which, although my mind was upon Henry IV.'s white plume, is exactly similar to that of Madoc floating like foam on the wave tempest. If my powers were equal to my sense of honesty, as I would to Heaven they were, I would offer you the fourfold requital of the Levitical law, but that would be no easy matter. I have been very much interested lately with the Remains of H. K. White,[1] which however left a very melancholy impression on my mind. Was there no patron for such a man but Simeon and Wilberforce, who with the best intentions in the world seem to have encouraged his killing himself by religious enthusiasm? I am afraid that sort of people do not recollect that enthusiasm like other potent draughts should be tempered to the strength of the patient. A dram which hardly warms the veins of a rough-nerved Scotchman will drive to frenzy a more sensitive system. I wish Simeon and Levi would confine their operations to hard-headed *Cantabs*, and make no excursions to Nottingham for crimping young poets.

I have some very curious letters from a spy, sent into Scotland at the time of the great Northern Rebellion, in which there is a good deal mention made of the Nortons. I have written to Wordsworth to offer him copies or extracts, but adding that I suppose his "siege is finished," as Vertot said when he received some original materials from Malta. You make me very curious to see his poem;[2] he is a great master of the passions.

I have some hopes we may meet in London. God speed your *magnum opus*;[3] I venture to prophesy it will be generally interesting. It will give me great pleasure to learn that my preux Chevalier 'Marmion' has afforded you

[1] Lately edited by Southey, who thought the young poet, in point of genius, quite equal to Chatterton, and a far greater loss to the world. —*Selections*, i. p. 411.

[2] Wordsworth's Poem, *The White Doe of Rylstone*; not published, however, until 1815.

[3] *The History of Portugal.*—*Ante*, n. p. 39.

any pleasure. He is popular here, but we are you know national in our taste, so I wait my doom from London, and shall abide it *sans peur et sans reproche*, taking that phrase a little differently than as it applies to Bayard.—Believe me with great regard, dear Southey, yours truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY LOUISA STUART.

EDINR., *3d March* 1808.

. . . I HAVE thought on your reading about the death of Constance, and with all the respect which (*sans* phrase) I entertain for everything you honour me with, I have not made up my mind to the alteration, and here are my reasons. Clare has no wish to embitter Marmion's last moments, and is only induced to mention the death of Constance because she observes that the wounded man's anxiety for her deliverance prevents his attending to his own spiritual affairs. It seems natural, however, that knowing by the Abbess, or however you please, the share which Marmion had in the fate of Constance, she should pronounce the line assigned to her in such a manner as perfectly conveyed to his conscience the whole truth, although her gentleness avoided conveying it in direct terms. We are to consider too that Marmion had from various workings of his own mind been led to suspect the fate of Constance, so that the train being ready laid the slightest hint of her fate communicated the whole tale of terror to his conviction. Were I to read the passage, I would hesitate a little like one endeavouring to seek a soft mode of conveying painful intelligence—

> "In vain for Constance is your zeal,
> She——died at Holy Isle."

Perhaps after all this is too fine spun, and requires more from my gentle readers to fill up my sketch than I am

entitled to exact. But I would rather put in an explanatory couplet describing Clare's manner of speaking the words, than make her communication more full and specific. . . .

We have Miss Baillie here as a visitor at present. I hope she will make some little stay in Edinburgh. I have been much distressed by the late bad accounts of dear little Lord Scott's health.[1] God grant he may recover. Out of my own family there is no loss I would so deeply deprecate.

TO MISS SMITH.

EDINR., *4th March* 1808.

. . . WE have Mrs. Siddons here, I believe to take her farewell[2] of the Edinburgh audience. I observe you have been performing along with her in town, and was most happy to hear (for I did not fail to inquire,) that you sustained the comparison as triumphantly as your warmest friends could wish. If London had been within 100 miles, I would certainly have come to see you both on the same stage. We have Miss Baillie here at present, who is certainly the best dramatic writer whom Britain has produced since the days of Shakespeare and Massinger. I hope you have had time to look into her tragedies (the comedies you may [pass] over without any loss), for I am sure you will find much to delight you, and I venture to prophesy you will one day have an excellent opportunity to distinguish yourself in some of her characters. I mean if the real taste for the Drama, independent of sham and scenery, should ever happen to revive, of which I think your being permitted to remain upon the *shelf* as you call

[1] Lord Dalkeith's eldest son.

[2] Merely a temporary leave-taking, as Mrs. Siddons returned to Edinburgh in 1810 and again in 1815.

it is no very promising symptom. We have an actor here of considerable merit called Young;[1] he is a well-educated and gentleman-like man, and an enthusiast in his profession. I sometimes have the pleasure of seeing him in private, and like him very much. . . .

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINBURGH, 13*th March* 1808.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I see with pleasure that both the *Marmions* have been at last received. What should have delayed the delivery of the first, I cannot guess. As to the Holland House copy, assuredly I know nothing of it, not holding any correspondence with that mansion. The bookseller here satisfied me by showing his invoices that he sent off none so early as that to the Princess and your Ladyship's. I suspect strongly that Miller,[2] who has a share in the book, had fallen on some means to get a copy privately, being anxious I presume to gratify the Hollands since he became purchaser of Fox's work. All the Whigs here are in arms against *Marmion*. If I had satirised Fox they could have borne it, but a secondary place for the god of their idolatry puts them beyond the slender degree of patience which displaced patriots usually possess. I make them welcome to cry till they are hoarse against both the book and author, as they are not in the habit of having majorities upon their side. I suppose the crossed critics of Holland House will take the same tone in your Metropolis.

You ask me why I do not rather think of original

[1] Charles Mayne Young was at this time the rival of J. P. Kemble in Hamlet.—See *Memoirs* by his son the Rev. Julian Young, 8vo, London, 1871.

[2] William Miller, Albemarle Street, was the publisher of Fox's *Life of James II.*, as well as of Scott's *Dryden*, and he had also a fourth share of *Marmion*.

production than editing the works of others, and I will frankly tell your Ladyship the reason. In the first place, no one acquires a certain degree of popularity without exciting an equal degree of malevolence among those who, either from rivalship or the mere wish to pull down what others have set up, are always ready to catch the first occasion to lower the favour'd individual to what they call his *real standard*. Of this I have enough of experience, and my political interferences, however useless to my friends, have not failed to make me more than the usual number of enemies. I am therefore bound in justice to myself, and to those whose good opinion has hitherto protected me, not to peril myself too frequently. The naturalists tell us that if you destroy the web which the spider has just made, the insect must spend many days in inactivity till he has assembled within his person the materials necessary to weave another. Now after writing a work of imagination one feels in nearly the same exhausted state with the spider. I believe no man now alive writes more rapidly than I do, (no great recommendation,) but I never think of making verses till I have a sufficient stock of poetical ideas to supply them. I would as soon join the Israelites in Egypt in their heavy task of making bricks without straw. Besides, I know as a small farmer that good husbandry consists in not taking the same crop too frequently from the same soil, and as turnips come after wheat according to the best rules of agriculture, I take it that an edition of Swift will do well after such a scourging crop as *Marmion*. Meantime I have by no means relinquished my thoughts of a Highland poem, but am gradually collecting the ideas and information necessary for that task. Perhaps I shall visit Green Erin to collect what I can learn of Swift; if so, I hope you will be at Barons Court when I undertake my pilgrimage to your native Land of Saints. My journey to London is unsettled, for Robert Dundas, or rather his

Lady, seems to think there is no immediate occasion for it. As Lord Melville will be in town shortly after this reaches your Ladyship, I fancy his presence will quicken the passing of the Scotch Bill; and when that has passed Parliament, my motions will be decided by the order of the Commission appointed under it; that is, if I am successful in being named their Secretary.

Duchess of Gordon is here very gay and very angry with me. I believe I have been a little negligent in my attentions upon her, but she should consider how little my time is at my own disposal, and pity instead of abusing me. We are, however, very civil when we meet.

My poor dear Lord Scott[1] will never leave my memory. I had a sort of feudal attachment to the boy, who was all the friends of his family could wish. Dalkeith and his Lady are gone to Bothwell, as I learn by a letter from Lord Montagu. I hardly know how the arrow of fate could have hit a more vulnerable point. But great and small we are alike her butt. One thing alone is out of her power—the unalterable and sincere regard, with which I am, dear Lady Abercorn, your much obliged and very faithful W. S.

TO THE SAME.

Castle Street, 3*d April* 1808.

Dear Lady Marchioness,—Accept with your usual goodness a copy of the Life of Dryden, of which Mr. Miller has thrown off a few separate from the works. We have often heard of a rivulet of text meandering through a

[1] Lord Scott, the Earl of Dalkeith's eldest son, died a few days after *Marmion* was published. The well-known lines on the boy in the poem were printed before Scott knew of his illness, and they would have been omitted in the second edition if the Author had not heard that they had given the poor mother a sad pleasure.

meadow of margin. But these books (saving that the shape is square) rather look like St. James's Square with the pool of water in the midst of it.

The *Morning Chronicle* of the 29th March has made a pretty story of the cancel of page 10th of *Marmion*, which your Ladyship cannot but recollect was reprinted for the sole purpose of inserting the lines suggested so kindly by the Marquis—

> "For talents mourn, untimely lost,
> When best employed, and wanted most";

I suppose from the carelessness of those who arranged the book for binding, this sheet may not in a copy or two have been right placed, and the worthy Editor affirms kindly that this was done that I might have copies to send to Mr. Pitt's friends in which these lines do not occur ! ! ! My publishers here, who forwarded the books, have written in great wrath to contradict the story, and were surprised to find I had more inclination to laugh at it. This is a punishment for appropriating my neighbour's goods. I suppose it would surprise Mr. *Morning Chronicle* considerably to know that the couplet in question was written by so distinguished a friend of Mr. Pitt as Lord Abercorn.

The Princess of Wales sent me a most elegant silver cup and cover, with a compliment upon *Marmion*, particularly on the part respecting the Duke of Brunswick, which was very flattering.

When your Ladyship can find an opportunity to let me know that you like the Life of Dryden, that you are well, and that I live in your remembrance, I need not say how agreeable it will be to your most respectful and truly grateful W. Scott.

TO ROBERT SURTEES.[1]

4th April [1808].

MY DEAR SIR,— . . . As for Prince Charles—"he that wandering knight so fair"—we will talk about him when we meet. I have always thought of a Highland poem before hanging my harp on the willows, and perhaps it would be no bad setting for such a tale to suppose it related for his amusement in the course of his wanderings after the fatal field of Culloden. Flora Macdonald, Kingsburgh, Lochiel, the Kennedies, and many other characters of dramatic interest might be introduced, and the time is now passed away when the theme would have had both danger and offence in it.

When you have read over *Marmion*, which has more individuality of character than the *Lay*, although it wants a sort of tenderness which the personage of the old minstrel gave to my first-born romance, you will be a better judge whether I should undertake a work which will depend less on incident and description than on the power of distinguishing and marking the *dramatis personæ*. But all this is in embryo, the creation of your letter and may never go farther. . . .

April 18th.— . . . I am very glad you like *Marmion*; it has need of some friends, for Jeffrey showed me yesterday a very sharp review of it,—I think as tight a one as he has written since Southey's *Madoc*. As I don't believe the world ever furnished a critic and an author who were more absolute *poco curanti* about their craft, we dined together and had a hearty laugh at the revisal of the flagellation,[2] etc. etc.

[1] For entire letter see *Memoir in Surtees' Society*, vol. for 1852, p. 66.

[2] For Mr. Lockhart's account of the dinner at 39 Castle Street and Jeffrey's letter to Scott, see *Life*, vol. iii. pp. 50-55.

FROM JOANNA BAILLIE.[1]

BROWN SQUARE, *April* [1808].

MY DEAR SIR,—I am afraid before we leave Edin^r^ I may have no opportunity of speaking to you, and therefore I write to you along with your manuscript, which I return with many thanks. I have read your Tragedy twice, and have been more pleased with it the second time than the first; the story is very interesting, the writing forcible, and the characters of Rudiger and George—the dignity of the one and the spirit of the other—well imagined and contrasted.

The opening of the piece pleased me very much, and so did that scene which is the most important one in the whole play, between the mother and her son when he wants to discover whether she is really guilty or not, tho' perhaps it is rather under-written (if I may use the phrase) from a fear of being extravagant.

The scene in the Chapel I was also struck with, when the Lady is led off by the figure in black coming from behind her husband's tomb; and the last scene is finely imagined, particularly the first part of it, when George discovers himself, and the man of fourscore is appointed to be his executioner. There is in the whole Play sufficient knowledge of nature and force of expression to make your friends look forward with a very pleasing hope to what may hereafter follow, when you shall write on a better

[1] When visiting Scott in Edinburgh, the author of the *Family Legend*, whose personal acquaintance he had made in London in 1806, undertook to give an opinion on an early dramatic attempt of Scott's. "To read his verses o'er and tell the truth! A dangerous task!" Her honest criticism on the *House of Aspen* is here given. George Ellis on the other hand was so delighted with this Germanised play that he told Scott he spent the evening of his wedding-day reading it to his wife.

dramatic plan, and allow your delightful imagination more liberally to enrich the work.

The dry bare German way of writing suits a poor Poet, but not a rich one.

If you ever make any use of this piece, I would have you to disencumber your plot of some things that might easily be spared, and bring more into view the character of George, which you have so justly imagined, while he is in the terrible state of suspense in regard to his mother's guilt. It is a pity that all this should be put over in one scene, when the audience might be kept in a state of the most agitating suspense that would wonderfully heighten the effect of the whole Play.

But I hope some time or other to have an opportunity of speaking to you of these matters, so I shall only at present return you a great many thanks for the confidence you have put in me, and for the high gratification I have had in reading the *House of Aspen*.

As you know, I have a Tragedy at home in which a wife discovers the guilt of her husband by the dying confession of a servant who was present at the crime, and I have scenes afterwards between her and the husband, in which she tries to discover whether he is really guilty or not. Don't after this think, if you should see it, that I have borrowed the idea from you; it has been long written and is now in the hands of Mrs. Baillie; and if you should ever work up this part of your piece more fully, it may be an amusement to us some time or other to compare the two plays in this respect together.[1]

I will not let you beat me on my own ground if I can

[1] The comparison may now be made, as the *House of Aspen* is included in Scott's *Poetical Works*, vol. xii. p. 363, and Joanna Baillie's tragedy called *The Separation*, in which there are several very striking scenes, will be found in the second vol. of *Dramas* published in 1836, or in the collected edition of her works, 8vo, London, 1835, p. 530.

help it; but, if it must be so, I will less grudgingly yield the victory to you than any other poet I know of.

With kind wishes to Mrs. Scott and the young laird of Gilnockie[1] and every living being that belongs to you, I remain, my dear sir, your sincere and obliged

J. Baillie.

FROM LADY LOUISA STUART.[2]

Gloucester Place, [*April*] 1808.

Dear Sir,—You will think it is a persecution when you see my hand again, but I have a ridiculous grievance that if you cannot redress, perhaps you can at least help me to understand.

When I first came to town my sister Lonsdale told me, laughing, she had heard news of me; a very great Lady of your acquaintance had informed her that I was publishing a volume of poems at Edinburgh. Lady L. replied it was very unlike me, when the [Princess] with a peremptory "I *know* it to be true" reduced her to silence. I hooted at this, as you may suppose, but concluded her R.H. had mistaken some other person's name for mine, and thought little more about the matter till yesterday, when my sister, who had again had the honour of dining at Blackheath, acquainted me that the Princess asked her before a large company whether I had yet let her into the secret of my publication. She repeated as far as respect would permit what I had myself said on the subject; but the P[rincess] more positively than before silenced her with "*I know it; I tell you it is so;* and if she will not trust you, then I will; for I am to have

[1] The family name of young Walter.

[2] Scott has written on the back, "an excellent letter about an unfounded report."

a copy; there are to be but fifteen printed, and Mr. Skene (Mr. Skene! my dear Mr. Scott, whom I never saw in my life! or heard of till you read us the epistle to him at Bothwell!!!)—Mr. Skene has promised me one, which I will let you see when I get it. I believe Lady Louisa's name is not to be put to it, which I daresay is what she means by denying it."

Some of the company on this enquired what her R.H. was talking of. She turns to them, "I was only mentioning some poems of Lady Louisa Stuart's that she is publishing at Edinburgh."

I hardly know whether I am awake or dreaming while I write this curious conversation; but upon my word it would provoke a saint.

Imagine that my above-mentioned sister, nor any other member of my family, ever saw a verse of mine since I was seventeen, or had one in their possession; and that many of them, and several of my most intimate friends, to this hour do not suspect I ever wrote one. It is really too hard upon a poor snail to be dragged by the horns into the high road, when it is eating nobody's cabbages, and only desires to live at peace in its own shell. However, if I could be certain the lye was a lye of the best and honestest kind, unadulterated by any faint mixture of something like truth, I should make up my mind to patience, as if it were reported I had stood upon my head, or married my footman. But my dear sir, your theft of "Ugly Meg," comes very unpleasantly to my recollection; not that I can or will suspect you (for all the Princesses in Europe) of playing me so unfair and barbarous a trick, as it would be to come within a hundred miles of verifying her R.H.'s assertion; but I am sadly afraid that there lies the ground the story has been built upon; and that is bad enough to me. Mr. Skene being thus quoted by

name, you may be able to find out—I dare not write it in English—*que diable veut dire tout ça?*

If "Ugly Meg" has the least share in it, I do most earnestly beg and beseech you, gratify me by putting her in the fire. I don't know whether the man in the old story was right when he called it a woman's highest praise not to be talked of one way or the other; but I am sure it is her greatest blessing, and only way of living in comfort. At any rate, I entreat, nay (forgive the word!) insist, that when you visit this part of the world, you neither show it nor repeat it to the great lady in question, nor tell her anything about me. I would rather of the two see it in the *Morning Post* outright, for the currency of a newspaper is nothing to the gossip of a court. The former can tell a fact, false or true, but one way at once; the latter varies, and multiplies, and modifies it in so many, that it becomes past the power of the first relator to guess it ever was his own story, before it had been half an hour out of his mouth.

Now I have said thus much, another conjecture has struck me; may it not be Mr. Alison's funeral sermon on Sir Wm. Forbes, of which there were but a few copies printed, and some of those few have gone through my hands to people who were anxious for it here? Mr. Skene may come in very naturally there. My friend's sermon being converted into a poem of mine, tho' it sounds like one of Harlequin's transformations, might be effected in the course of tattle through a very few tongues.

Dear Mr. Scott, pardon my worrying you with this tedious letter, and if you can quash the nonsense that extorts it from me, or expound the riddle, you will very much oblige, yours, etc. etc.,

L. Stuart.

TO LADY LOUISA STUART.

Edinburgh, *7th April* 1808.

My dear Lady Louisa,—I was honoured with your Ladyship's letter this morning. Unless the report in question be an express punishment from heaven for hiding your talent in a napkin, or that "there 's magic in the web on 't," I cannot offer any absolute solution. I never, I am positive, mentioned your Ladyship's name to the high personage in question, or in writing to Miss Hayman, the only lady of her household with whom I have any correspondence. Skene, as your Ladyship may readily believe, knows nothing of the intended publication, and was never so happy as to see any of the editor's verses. I think the artist who made the little sketch at the beginning of "Ugly Meg" would hardly presume to mention it, as I cautioned him on the subject. The poem was never given out of my own hand nor mentioned as your Ladyship's, although I must plead guilty to having shown it to one or two literary friends, as a piracy which I had committed upon a lady of my acquaintance. If it is possible that the little drawing has been thus converted into a set of embellishments by Skene, the six pages of manuscript into fifteen copies of a printed book, wire wove, hot pressed, and with a suitable margin, I shall deeply regret being the cause, however innocently, of having done anything that could contribute to so wonderful a transformation. Yet I can hardly think it, as I am certain I never showed the poem to more than three persons. I cannot find in my heart to condemn "Ugly Meg" to the flames as a witch, being convinced she had so very little to do with the mysterious report in question, but in future she shall be condemned to as severe seclusion as if she was the fairest Circassian in the seven

towers. Depend upon it, my dear Lady Louisa, that if any inquiry is made at me by her Royal Highness upon this subject, I will attend most heedfully and pointedly to your injunctions. I must just say, if I am pointedly charged with the existence of "Ugly Meg," that she has been reclaimed by your Ladyship in consequence of some reports which had gone abroad of her being about to be given to the world, and that I had forgotten every line of her. By the way, I forgot to mention that I *never* showed "Ugly Meg" to any one since your Ladyship made my plunder lawful; so that I have been in all respects a thief of honour. I think it by no means unlikely that a jumble may have been made by that long-tongued gossip Fame between the sermon which *was* printed, the poem which was *not* printed, the drawings which Mr. Skene *did* make for the Princess, the drawings which he did *not* not make for "Ugly Meg." And out of this hodge podge, with a considerable mixture of unadulterated *lye*, the cup has been brewed which your Ladyship regards with so much terror. I am less surprised at anything of the kind, as by a process equally well founded and oracular, I had the inexpressible happiness to see myself but the other day pronounced by the *Morning Chronicle* guilty of garbling my own poem and giving one sort of book to Mr. Pitt's friends and another to the public; yet I believe your Ladyship is more teazed with a report, the nature of which is not only innocent, but would, if true, do your talents honour, than I am with one that would argue me guilty of equal meanness and folly. But the feelings of a professed author, and such I must be while my family continues to require my exertions, get very callous to this species of scandal. I have adopted your Ladyship's kind suggestion about the speech of Constance, but after much consideration have placed only one hyphen or dash to express her confusion. *Marmion,* in consequence of an

unexampled demand, has been hurried through the press, and the second edition is on the eve of publication. Miller in Albemarle Street will have a copy, of which I have to entreat your kind acceptance. A copy of the Life of Dryden will also kiss your hands in a day or two. . . . Adieu, dear Lady Louisa; I regret I am not the knight for whom it is reserved to break the charm which has converted a high-born and distressed lady into a professed authoress. I have no doubt it will soon dissolve of itself,

> For never spell by fairy laid,
> With strong enchantment bound a glade
> Beyond the bounds of night.

Ever your obliged, WALTER SCOTT.[1]

TO LADY ABERCORN.

26th April (1808).

MY DEAR LADY MARCHIONESS,—. . . If a wish could transport me to the Priory, I should not be long in paying my personal respects. Your heavenly weather makes me envy you, could I envy any advantage that is so well bestowed. We are here among hills white with snow and rivers red with rain, the atmosphere being an *ambigu* between the one and the other, the land looking like Nova Zembla, though I am not conscious of having left Scotland, and the climate feeling like Christmas, though the Almanack maintains to my very face that it is the 26th of April. Very sad all this, and what is worse, the groom says he cannot get forage for the horses, and the dairymaid protests that there is no food for the cows, and the lambs are dying by scores as fast as they are yeaned,—and the pigs—and the poultry—and the dogs—and lastly the children, are all

[1] Indorsation of the transcript in Lady Louisa Stuart's handwriting: "Answer to a letter I wrote in a foolish fuss about a foolish *fib* of the Princess of Wales, viz., that I was editing my poems".

in some danger of being actually starved. Seriously, I believe that if the weather does not mend speedily, we shall have a terrible year in our South Highlands, and still worse in the North. . . .

The Whigs here and in London are furious, and yet I think with very little reason. If I did not rather dislike satire from principle, than feel myself altogether disqualified from it by nature, I have the means of very severe retaliation in my power, particularly with respect to Holland House, which has busied itself much more in my matters than I approve of. Is it not astonishing that people will begin to throw stones with so many glass windows in their own heads? Nobody cares what these great folks can say of me, but should I take the humour of returning their abuse, I suspect I would find auditors enough.

Sotheby told me he wrote his last poem to discharge his conscience of a religious duty, and without any reference to temporal popularity.[1] I am concerned to observe from your Ladyship's letter that he is again suffering worldly ambition to creep in upon him. I am much flattered with Lawrence's approbation of *Marmion*. He is truly a man of genius; his own art cannot be practised without constant exercise of the imagination, and therefore his vote is worth that of hundreds.

Have you heard, by the bye, that little Mrs. Riddell of Hampton Court (Burns's Mrs. Riddell[2]) has married a young officer of Dragoons? My friend Mathias (the author of the Pursuits of Literature) will in all probability break his heart upon this melancholy occasion. I am obliged to break off abruptly, for I see the carriage of a crazy Welsh

[1] William Sotheby had published a quarto volume of poetry, entitled *Saul*, in 1807.

[2] Scott made Mrs. Walter Riddell's acquaintance when in London in the spring of 1807. She afterwards sent him some of Burns's Election songs with a complimentary letter to our "latest minstrel." For details respecting Mrs. Riddell see Chambers's *Burns*. Her second husband was an Irish gentleman named Fletcher. She died in 1812.

woman of our acquaintance, who is come (Lord help hur) to see our romantic scenery when it is ankle deep in snow. Have you ever seen hur? She is a certain Miss Lydia White, nineteen times dyed blue, lively and clever and absurd to the uttermost degree, but exceedingly good-natured.[1] I think I must let her run some risque in fording the Tweed, that we may show to more advantage from her joy at finding herself on dry land. But as this joke must not be carried too far, good-bye, my dear friend.

W. S.

TO THE SAME.

EDINBURGH, *9th June* 1808.

MY DEAR LADY MARCHIONESS,—. . . No one is so sensible as I am of what deficiencies occur in my poetry from the want of judicious criticism and correction, above all from the extreme hurry in which it has hitherto been composed. The worst is that I take the pet at the things myself after they are finished, and I fear I shall never be able to muster up the courage necessary to revise *Marmion* as he should be revised. But if I ever write another poem, I am determined to make every single couplet of it as perfect as my uttermost care and attention can possibly effect. In order to ensure the accomplishment of these good resolutions, I will consider the whole story in humble prose, and endeavour to make it as interesting as I can before I begin to write it out in verse, and thus I shall have at least the satisfaction to know where I am going, my narrative having been hitherto much upon the plan of *blind man's buff*. Secondly, having made my story, I will write my poem with all deliberation, and when finished lay it aside for a year at least, during which *quarantine* I would be most happy if it were suffered to remain in

[1] Scott had a real regard for this lady of whom he writes thus playfully. — See his remarks on her death in 1827, *Journal*, vol. ii. pp. 351-2.

your escritoire or in that of the Marquis, who has the best ear for English versification of any person whom, in a pretty extensive acquaintance with literary characters, I have ever had the fortune to meet with; nor is his taste at all inferior to his power of appreciating the harmony of verse. In this way I hope I shall be able to gain the great advantage of his Lordship's revision and consideration, provided he should find it in any respect worthy his attention.[1] You see what good resolutions I am forming; whether they will be better kept than good resolutions usually are, time, which brings all things to light, will shew your Ladyship.

As for her Grace of Gordon she is certainly the most ungracious of Graces if she says I read over *Marmion* to her. The only time she saw *Marmion* (excepting however the first Introduction, which your Ladyship remembers was printed separately) was at the Priory, when I read some part of it one evening, and whether the Duchess was then so good as to point out any of its numerous errors, I really cannot recollect. I certainly neither had her Grace's particular amusement, nor the least intention of consulting her critically, in my head at the time. Our real quarrel is some supposed neglect in my not attending her parties last winter in Edinburgh.[2]

I have had a very handsome compliment from the booksellers who published *Marmion*,—no less than a hogshead of excellent claret, which is equally flattering as a pretty sure mark that the book has succeeded with the public, and agreeable to a poor bard, whose cellars are not quite so well replenished with wine as his head with whimsies.

[1] Many years after the first Marquis of Abercorn had gone to his rest—he died in 1818—Scott endeavoured to do justice to his character as a scholar, public speaker, landlord, and friend.—See *Miscellanies*, vol. iv. (*Kemble*) p. 182.

[2] The Duchess of Gordon's ruling passion at this time was an affectation for literature and a desire to be the arbitress of literary taste.

I am endeavouring to get a copy of the Elgin Letters by my interest with little Jeffrey the Reviewer, who was the fair Lady's counsel in the case, but I doubt greatly being able to succeed in that quarter, for since I gave up assisting him in the *Review*, when their politics became so warm, my credit with him is a little at ebb.

I have been threatening for some days past to go to Dunira[1] for a day or two, and pay my respects to the good old statesman. I wish the Marquis and your Ladyship would come down this summer. I should delight to go a little way into the Highlands with you, as I am certain you would be enchanted.

I am truly glad you like the Dryden. I would have sent your Ladyship a whole set of the works if I had had a handsome one at my disposal. I am still turning my eyes towards Swift. My situation will not permit me to be idle, even if my inclination would leave me at rest. I beg my most respectful thanks to the Marquis, and I hope your Ladyship will tell him how much I *intend* to profit by his kind admonitions, which I account a very great favour among the many of various kinds which I have received at his hands. When this Scottish Judicature Bill gets through Parliament, I shall learn if I am likely to be wanted in London, and if so, I need not say how soon I will be an intruder at the Priory.—Believe me with very great respect, ever your Ladyship's truly obliged and very faithful W. S.

TO THOMAS SCOTT.[2]

[20*th June* 1808.]

MY DEAR TOM,—I take this opportunity . . . to offer you my best and warmest congratulations upon your

[1] Lord Melville's country house near Crieff, Perthshire.

[2] Thomas Scott, on giving up business in Edinburgh, obtained a commission in the Manx Fencibles, and was then residing in the Isle of Man.

approaching military preferment. I have no doubt you will now not only find yourself extremely comfortable, but also in a situation to save money, which like other things wants but a beginning. . . .

Let me exhort you most heartily to give your mind to an edition of Shadwell, which I think I could dispose of for something handsome for you. I have almost all the original editions, and could take care that the press was properly corrected, and would also revise your notes, as you are diffident in point of language. I am perfectly sure you will find great pleasure in this work if you would but set about it; and also that your habitual acquaintance with the old dramatists would enable you to make very entertaining notes and illustrations. I do not mention this merely as an easy way of picking up 100 guineas or so, but because I know by experience that one is apt to tire even of reading, unless we read with some special and determined object,—an employment which will fill up pleasantly many hours which might otherwise hang very heavy; at least you may believe it, I find it so myself, as I am just now seriously engaged in two mighty works, *Lord Somers' Tracts* and *Swift's Works*, which will keep me working for two or three years to come. . . .

Charlotte is just returned from Ashestiel, and joins me in warmest joy to Mrs. Scott on your promotion.—Believe me, dear Tom, yours, W. S.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ASHESTIEL, 14*th October* 1808.

I WOULD not have been so long silent, my dear Lady Abercorn, if I had either had anything interesting to communicate, or could have assured myself that in telling my *no-story* I was not intruding upon time which your Ladyship knows so well how to employ much better. The

summer has slid away without anything remarkable, except that I have been arranging for republication the large collection of Tracts published from Lord Somers' library. This occupation is little more than amusement, yet will be worth £400 a year to me for three or four years. I know your Ladyship will scold me for fagging in this way, but it is a sort of relaxation after *Marmion*, and Dryden requires little exertion, and is precisely the sort of thing I would wish to do for my own amusement, while it materially assists my family arrangements. As to the rest, I have been shooting a little and coursing a great deal, and have had the pleasure of some very agreeable visitors from England, particularly a Mr. Morritt and his lady.[1] He is a great friend of Mr. Payne Knight, deep in Grecian lore of course, which led him some years ago to visit the very ground where Troy town stood. They had been on a visit to Lord and Lady Aberdeen, and were delighted with their kindness;[2] they stayed about a week with us, and I shewed them all the remarkables in our neighbourhood, and told them a story for every *cairn*.

I am still making collections towards an edition of Swift, and promise myself great advantage in this task from a visit to Ireland under your Ladyship's auspices. But we will talk of all this when I have the pleasure of being at the Priory, which I am apt to think will be in the course of a few weeks, probably in the beginning of next month. The Commission to which, by your Ladyship's kind intercessions, I am to act as Secretary, is expected (according to Lord Advocate's information) to meet in the beginning of November, when my presence will be necessary.

[1] The first notice of a meeting with Mr. Morritt of Rokeby, which led to one of the most valuable friendships of Scott's life. Mr. Morritt survived his friend until 1843.

[2] At Haddo. Lady Aberdeen was Lord Abercorn's daughter. For the touching story of their brief married life, see Sir A. Gordon's *Memoir*. London, 1893.

As I shall only be wanted for a short time in town, I have thoughts of bringing up Mrs. Scott with me, who has not been in London for some years.

I should be much honoured by permission to inscribe my magnificent Swift to Lord Abercorn; but your Ladyship remembers what the Marquis said about Sotheby's *Orestes*.[1] I should not like to lay his Lordship under the dilemma of accepting what he might perhaps justly regard as no great compliment. Any new original work of my own is a very distant consideration. Could I arrange my motions exactly according to my wishes, I should like greatly to spend this winter in Spain. I am positive that in a nation so strangely agitated, I might observe something both of the operation of human passions under the strongest possible impulse, and of the external pomp and circumstance attending military events, which could be turned to account in poetry. I do not mean that I would precisely write a poem on the Spanish events,[2] but that I would endeavour to collect from what I might witness there, so just an idea of the feelings and sentiments of a people in a state of patriotic enthusiasm, as might hereafter be useful in any poetical work I might undertake. The poets of the present day seem always to be copying from the ancients and from each other. I would fain if possible have a peep at the great Book of Nature. All this is of course an airy vision, yet I cannot banish the wish from my mind, though without any hope of gratifying it.

Should this letter be a little dull, your Ladyship's charity must impute it to this deplorable day, which after all borders however more on the terrific than the stupifying. It has snowed, rained, hailed, and blown, without a moment's cessation, for 36 hours. The river Tweed has come down

[1] Sotheby's Tragedy was published in 1802.

[2] Vimeira was fought on the 21st August, and was followed next day by the Convention of Cintra.

"three yards abreast," as my hind expresses it—a grand spectacle, the magnificence of which is all I am likely to enjoy for a field of potatoes which it is in the very act of destroying.

I beg my respectful compliments to Lady Maria,[1] the Marquis, and Lord Hamilton, and Mrs. Scott offers hers to your Ladyship.—Adieu, my dear Lady Abercorn, I am ever your Ladyship's much obliged, most devoted

W. Scott.

TO MORRITT.[2]

15th Oct. 1808.

My dear Sir,—I was quite happy to learn that Mrs. Morritt had not received any great inconvenience from my injudicious anxiety to show her as much of the wonders of Yarrow as our time would permit. I was really angry at myself for not recollecting how bad the roads must have been after so much rain. I can only hope I will have a more propitious season the next time I have the pleasure of shewing Mrs. Morritt and you the beauties of Ettrick.

The ornaments on Bishop Bell's tomb, which I have this morning received your draught of, are very curious, and certainly shew some resemblance to those in Strathmore. But there is this essential difference, that in the Bishop's case they seem to have been merely an arabesque border on which the artist doubtless exercised his own fancy; whereas upon the stones they stand in place of all sort of inscription or sepulchral notice whatever, and are therefore in the latter case the principal, whereas upon the tomb of the Bishop I conceive them only

[1] Lord Abercorn's youngest daughter.

[2] When Morritt was at Ashestiel he and Scott had a discussion on the sculptured stones of Scotland. Mr. Morritt, on his return, called his friend's attention to the grotesque animal ornamentations on Bishop Bell's tomb at Carlisle, of which he now sent a tracing.

to be accessories. The disposition of the Gothic artists of every kind bordered on the grotesque; they carved upon every coign, buttress, and point of vantage over and over with the wildest forms their imagination could suggest. Still, however, these were only subordinate ornaments which the spectator sometimes hardly perceived without minute and curious inspection, whereas the standing stones bear little or nothing else than these pieces of imagery, which one would therefore suppose intended in some way or other to bear reference to the events of which these stones are obviously mementoes. Besides, I think it very unlikely that any person so remarkable as to have a laboured and expensive monument erected over him should have been interred at Glamis or Meigle so late as the fifteenth century without record or tradition telling us something of the matter. We know the burial-places of the Lindsays, Ogilvies, Ruthvens, Grays, Oliphants, and other families of rank in Angusshire, who lie decently interred under such monuments as you usually see in a cathedral—*i.e.* when they have had any monument at all erected to them—and I will venture to say that there are few such structures to which tradition does not hold up her lamp to aid us more or less clearly to read the decayed inscription; but the only tradition of these tombs carries us back to the days of romance, plainly showing therefore that no later or better-grounded history could be attached to them. It is very improbable that

Mrs. Grant of Laggan who had charge of Morritt's nephew, visited Rokeby in the autumn of 1807, and describes husband and wife:—"I was greatly pleased with Mr. Morritt of Rokeby Park, the uncle of my little ward: he is learned, without the least pedantry, lively without levity, and has such frankness and simplicity of manner, and seems to have a temper so obliging and affectionate. I have not seen a person so completely educated, and who has been so much in the world, that retains so much nature. Mrs. Morritt is, I think, an excellent woman, little less intelligent than her husband; with the same kindness of heart and kindred virtues.—*Memoir and Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 121.

they could have acquired the name of Vanore's tomb, etc., unless when the history of King Arthur was current in Scotland. Supposing that to carry us back about 200 years, and I can hardly allow less, is it probable that in a land of tradition like Scotland the romantic name and history derived from these legends should have in 1600 attached itself to the tomb of a Scottish chief who had then been dead only one or two hundred years? The fame of a Lindsay or a Lyon would not have been so easily dispossessed, and his name would have clung to his monument spite of King Arthur and all his chivalry, and of Queen Ganora[1] and all her iniquities. Let me add also that these stones agree exactly in appearance with that at Forres and those at Aberlemno, to which history enables us with some precision to ascribe a date, namely, during the Danish invasions. Yet one word on Bishop Bell's monument, though not quite to the present purpose. I have been much puzzled with certain antique brass plates used chiefly to collect the offerings at the door of Scottish churches. Besides something like a Scripture piece in the centre, I have seen more than one of them have characters inscribed around the verge, each word interchanged with such an emblematic or fanciful monster as occurs in your inscription. This matter interested me so much that I had one inscription carefully copied, and showed it to Mr. Douce, who informed me that in the 16th and 17th centuries the principal manufacture of such vessels was in the north of Germany, and that they were comparatively of modern date. I think it very likely that the brass rim for Bell's tomb may have been imported in like manner from the same country. This does not bear indeed on the question of the stones, which you see I am determined shall be just the younger brothers of those of Deucalion and Pyrrha. . . . I have been informed

[1] Queen Guenever of Malory.

I may expect to be called to London about the beginning of next month, and rather think Mrs. Scott seems disposed to accompany me, and we reflect with great pleasure on the opportunity it will give us to visit Rokeby Park on our way southward, and cultivate an acquaintance which does us so much pleasure and honour.

Heber has made us one of his flying visits, although he came all the way from Ripon on purpose. We could not get him to stay longer than three days with us. Perhaps you have seen him at Rokeby, as he is rather an erratic than a fixed star. Mrs. Scott joins in kindest respects to Mrs. Morritt, and I am always, my dear sir, your most obliged and faithful servant, WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ASHESTIEL, 27*th October* 1808.

MY DEAR LADY ABERCORN,—When I last wrote to you, I little thought I should have had such truly melancholy occasion to address your Ladyship again. I was quite shocked, though hardly surprised, to see announced in the papers the heavy loss which the Marquis has sustained in poor Lord Claud. I would be greatly obliged to you, my dear Madam, when you have a moment's time, to let me know how Lord Abercorn supports this deep and severe dispensation of Providence. I dare not indulge myself with the hope that there is any uncertainty in the report, as I heard such precarious accounts of his health from Madeira. It seems as if an evil fate had attended of late the families for whose prosperity and preservation I was bound equally by gratitude and inclination to be most anxiously interested. I saw Lady Dalkeith two days ago for the first time after the loss of poor dear Scott, and never passed a more painful interview in my life. She knew my attachment to the

poor boy, and wept most bitterly indeed. Thus Providence chequers the brightest prospects, and alloys the most exalted lot by misfortunes which are common to the lowest; but on such subjects consolation is in vain; the patient must minister it to himself, or await it from the hand of time. Do be so good as to let me know how the Marquis is. I know he will feel this blow most acutely, and believe me, ever your very faithful and respectful

W. Scott.

I had written thus far when I was honoured with your Ladyship's letter. God comfort you all, for He only can. . . .

I really thought of asking Lord Abercorn to suffer *Marmion* to be inscribed to him, and was only deterred by hearing him express his general dislike to dedications, which I thought might be a little hint for my conduct. Truth is, that unless the Marquis and the Buccleuch family, to whom I am naturally much attached, there are none among the great whom I am at all likely to intrude upon in this way, for as it is all I ever can do to show my respect and attachment, I would not willingly render it cheap by offering it to persons for whom I felt an inferior regard.

Had Lord Melville continued out of power, I should have liked to have inscribed my edition of Dryden to him, but there are many and insuperable objections to dedicating to any person in office, or next door to it. The next tale of chivalry shall certainly be Lord Abercorn's, that is, it shall be *yours*, my dear friend, and you shall dispose of it as you please. But *when* it will be written is a question of difficult decision.

My Spanish scheme is a mere romance, yet had I time next summer, I would try to realize it, as I learn languages easily, and can without inconvenience suffer a little hardship as to food and lodging.

My London journey is still uncertain. I shall perhaps learn something of it to-day, for Robert Dundas (Lord Melville's son) and his lady are to spend two days with us upon a pilgrimage to the ruins of Melrose. And Charlotte is calling to me to get out to look after hares and partridges for them, for in the desert we may sometimes say with Robin Hood :—

> "The meat we are to dine upon
> It runneth yet on foot."

Once more, your truly attached W. S.

TO MISS SEWARD.

1808.

. . . YOUR defence of my poetry was worthy of the friend, and more than worthy of the poet, and your high estimation of me must teach me more care and prudence on some future occasion, though heaven only knows when that occasion will arrive. Jeffrey I hear has reviewed my edition of *Dryden*, and censures me for employing my time in editing the works of others.[1] But what would he have? I have *neither* time *nor* inclination to be perpetually making butterflies, that he may have the pleasure of pulling their legs and wings off, and till writing occasionally shall cease to be a matter of convenience to my family, I will indulge myself in it easily and unambitiously. The critics tell me a poet ought to take care of his reputation, and really I think, like honest Bob Acres, that the best thing reputation can do in return is to take some care of the poet, and mine I am resolved shall do so.

As to the unfading laurels which they are kind enough

[1] The article on *Dryden* is understood to have been written by Hallam (*Life*, iii. p. 69), but personalities such as Scott complained of must have been added by another hand.—See *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xiii. p. 117.

to promise me if I will dedicate my time solely to the Muses, I care not for rewards which from their very nature are to be posthumous. Neither is it easy to gull me with these fair promises. The immortality of poetry is not so firm a point of my creed as the immortality of the soul.

"I've lived too long
And seen the death of much immortal song."

Nay, those that have really attained this literary immortality have gained it under very hard conditions. To some it has not attached till after death, and I like not such grinning honour as Falstaff says of my namesake Sir Walter Blunt. To others it has been the means of handing down personal vices and follies which had otherwise been unremembered in their epitaphs. And all enjoy this same immortality under a condition similar to that of Noureddin in an Eastern tale. Noureddin you remember was to enjoy the gift of immortality, but with this qualification, that he was subjected to long naps of forty, fifty, or an hundred years at a time. Even so Homer and Virgil slumbered through whole centuries. To be sure these were the dark ages, and therefore proper for repose.

Shakespeare himself enjoyed undisturbed sleep from the age of Charles I. until Garrick waked [him]. Dryden's fame has nodded, that of Pope begins to be drowsy; Chaucer is as sound as a top, and Spenser is snoring in the midst of his commentators. Milton indeed is quite awake, but observe he was at his very outset refreshed with a nap of half a century; and in the midst of all this we sons of degeneracy talk of immortality. Let me please my own generation, and let those that come after us judge of their taste and my performances as they please, the anticipation of their neglect or censure will affect me very little. I have been quite delighted with Southey's *Cid*, which is of

the kind the most pleasing and perfect thing I have read this many a day. . . .

TO JOANNA BAILLIE

ASHESTIEL, 31*st October* 1808.

MY DEAR MISS BAILLIE,—"From the chase on the mountain as I was returning," our little estafette brought me your *very very* kind letter. Believe I am fully sensible of the value of your friendly solicitude, and I wish I were as able as desirous to merit its continuance. I may say this with confidence, because it is the simple truth, that there breathes not the person whose opinion I hold in equal reverence, and therefore I leave you to judge how proud I am of the rank you have given me in it. I hasten to tell you that I never entertained for a second, a notion so very strange as to dedicate any poem to my friend Jeffrey, nor can I conceive how so absurd and causeless a rumour should have arisen. There is a foundation for the other part of the story, though no larger than a *midge's* wing. I had been making a little excursion to Stirling with Mrs. Scott, chiefly to show her that interesting part of Scotland, and on viewing the field of Bannockburn I certainly said that one day or other before I died, I hoped to make the earth yawn and devour the English archery and knighthood, as it did on that celebrated day of Scottish glory. This occasioned a little laughing at the time and afterwards, and was sufficient according to the regular progression of rumour to grow into a written or perhaps a printed form before it reached the city of London. But, independent of indolence, I am greatly too cautious to venture upon any new poetical essay for this long time to come; and as you are kind enough to permit me such ready access to you, I shall hope for your opinion on any future attempt, long before I have thought of a dedication. As to Mr. Jeffrey, I have great personal regard

for him, and high estimation of his talents. I have seldom known a man with equal readiness of ideas, or power of expressing them. But I had no reason to be so very much gratified by his review of *Marmion* as to propitiate him by a dedication of any work of mine. I have no fault to find with his expressing his sentiments frankly and fairly upon the poem, yet I think he might without derogation to his impartiality, have couched them in language rather more civil to a personal friend, and I believe he would have thought twice before he had given himself that air of superiority in a case where I had any chance of defending myself. Besides, I really have often told him that I think he wants the taste for poetry which is essentially necessary to enjoy, and of course to criticise, it with justice. He is learned with the most learned in its canons and laws, skilled in its modulation, and an excellent judge of the justice of the sentiments which it conveys, but he wants that enthusiastic feeling which like sunshine upon a landscape lights up every beauty, and palliates, if it cannot hide, every defect. To offer a poem of imagination to a man whose whole life and study has been to acquire a stoical indifference towards enthusiasm of every kind, would be the last, as it would surely be the silliest, action of my life. This is really my opinion of Jeffrey, not formed yesterday, nor upon any coldness between us, for there has been none. He has been possessed of it these several years, and it certainly never made the least difference between us: but I neither owe him, nor have the least inclination to offer him, such a mark of regard as the dedication of any work, past, present, or to come. . . .

CHAPTER V

1809

EDINBURGH AND ASHESTIEL

"And is it now a goodly sight,
Or dreadful to behold,
The pomp of that approaching fight,
Waving ensigns, pennons light,
And gleaming blades and bayonets bright,
And eagles wing'd with gold;
And warrior bands of many a hue,
Scarlet and white and green and blue,
Like rainbows, o'er the morning dew,
Their various lines unfold:"

Talavera. By J. Wilson Croker.

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1809—AGE 38

Death of Camp, January.

Quarterly Review launched. No. 1 published March 1809.

Scott visits London with wife, March and April; returns by Rokeby, May.

Sadler's State Papers, 2 vols. 4to, published by Constable, Edinburgh, 1809.

Becomes a Shareholder in the Edinburgh Theatre.

Visits Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond with wife and daughter, July.

Lady of the Lake commenced.

Contributions to *Quarterly Review*—

Cromek's Burns
Southey's Cid
Sir John Carr's Scotland
Life of Swift
} in No. 1, March 1809.

Campbell's Gertrude of Wyoming
Cumberland's John de Lancaster
} in No. 2, May 1809.

The Battles of Talavera } in No. 4, Nov. 1809.

CHAPTER V.

TO PATRICK MURRAY.

15th February 1809.

My dear Murray,— . . . It has, tho' rather too late, been resolved upon to attempt to divide the public with the *Edinburgh Reviewers*, and try if it be not possible, by a little havering and fun upon the other side of the question, to balance the extensive and extending influence which that periodical publication has acquired. William Gifford, renowned as the author of the "Baviad" and "Mæviad," and as the editor of the Anti-Jacobin newspaper, is the manager of this new work, which is to be called the *Quarterly Review*. I have some reasons for not being very sanguine in my hopes of success. The energy of folks in a right cause is always greatly inferior to that of their adversaries. They trust, good souls, to the intrinsic merit of their cause, and let it stick, like Æsop's waggon in the slough, while they address prayers to Hercules, instead of flogging the horses and putting shoulder to the wheel. Yet the aggregate of talent from which assistance is expected is very formidable. And if Gifford can spur on his coadjutors, I rather think we will make a handsome skirmish.

Now the corollary to this proposal is one which is in some degree mine own device, namely, an *Annual Register* in Edinburgh, to prevent the opposite faction from establishing such a work. . . .

Now my dear friend, you must give us a little assistance in this matter of the *Register*. You have, I know,

many curious letters from the learned of the last generation, and I think you might find one or two among them which could, without impropriety, and to the great advantage of the public, be printed in such a deposit. I am very anxious to get any scraps that can make the first volume as respectable as possible. I intend to revise and overlook the historical part, and as I am going to London I have little doubt I shall get access to materials of the most important kind. Indeed, Mr. Canning has promised me all assistance upon this head.—I am, with great regard, yours faithfully, WALTER SCOTT.[1]

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINR., 13 *March* [1809].

DEAR LADY ABERCORN,—I hope to have the honour of seeing you so soon that a very few lines may serve to express the pleasure I feel in your so kindly accepting the verses I sent you. . . . On Sunday I leave this place for town, and before the end of the week I hope to pay my respects to the Marquis. . . . We have been tearing each other's throats out like our own Highland terriers about the Scottish Judicature Bill, as the ministers are pleased to call it. I was astonished to see to-day in the *Courier* that some officious friend had given a (clumsy enough) report of

[1] This letter refers not only to the establishment of the *Quarterly Review*, but also to the unfortunate publishing enterprise on which Scott had just embarked in conjunction with James and John Ballantyne, and in which he was deeply involved for the next five years.

The numerous letters in the Abbotsford collection from Ellis, Gifford, and Murray, give a truer idea of the share Scott had in the establishment of the *Quarterly Review* than even the comprehensive statements of Mr. Lockhart, and more recently of Mr. Smiles; but readers of the present volume will perhaps be content with a few specimens, given in the Appendix, of the petitions, complaints, and thanks, that came in quick succession to Scott in his Tweedside farm from the sorely afflicted editor during the next two years.

what I tried to say for my poor old mother, the Law of Scotland. The circumstance will not tend to recommend me to those with whom I have unfortunately some official matters to arrange, and it was hardly fair to put me into the front of the battle; however, I care very little about it I never was gifted with the prudence either of suppressing my feelings or eating in my words, and I am only sorry they were not more neatly taken down.—Believe me, dear Lady Abercorn, your honoured, humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO SOUTHEY.

LONDON, *4th May* 1809.

. . . A PRESSURE of business, chiefly professional, has sent me up to this town, where I found the bearer of this letter, the younger Ballantyne of Edinburgh. I am not so well acquainted with him as with his brother, but enough to introduce him to you as an active and intelligent young man, very likely to make as great figure in the publishing trade as his brother does in the printing. He has been highly countenanced by all the booksellers of credit here, especially by your friends in the Row. His chief purpose of calling upon you is, to talk over the plan at which you hinted, of a *British Librarian*, to be published periodically. The *Censura*[1] is immediately to be given up, and Longman & Co. are to have some concern in this new work, which is however to be managed in Edinburgh. I think with you there is ample room for such a work; and that if conducted by you it would have

[1] Brydges' *Censura* (1809). The projected *British Librarian*, which Southey proposed naming *Rhadamanthus*, never came to maturity, and the idea was not even partially carried out until 1820, when the Retrospective Review was commenced.

The *Edinburgh Annual Register*, commencing with 1808, was doggedly persisted in, notwithstanding a heavy yearly loss, until 1827, when it was discontinued. Southey wrote the historical portion for some years, and was succeeded in that department by Scott, and subsequently by John Gibson Lockhart.

great interest, and suit both readers, booksellers, and editors. Indeed, I think smaller tracts which have an interest independent of their scarcity or antiquity ought to be reprinted at length, so that the miscellany might in some respects be a continuation of the Harleian, on a better plan. Should this plan be adopted, a quarto size will be preferable to 8vo, because it holds more. One vol. or even two might be published yearly. I will, in this or any undertaking in which I am at all qualified to assist, hold your backhand with great pleasure. . . . The title of such a work would be matter of serious consideration, but as I trust we shall speedily meet, we might beat our brains about that at leisure.

I hope to leave this place in about ten days, so pray let me know whether I shall find you disposed to come on with us to Edinburgh; there is nobody with me but Mrs. Scott. If you are unshaken in your resolution I will take my homeward route by Keswick, and we will take our northward flight together, as my stay here has been long. I fear even the Lake must not tempt me to stay above one night in its vicinity, so that I doubt I shall not even see Wordsworth, whom I would go some few miles to see at any time.

Everybody is delighted with your Missionary Review; the *Quarterly* has taken root and will thrive. Ever, dear Southey, yours most truly, WALTER SCOTT.

Pray write by return of post and don't disappoint me in my hopes of carrying you to Edinburgh.

TO THE SAME.

LONDON, 14*th June* 1809.

MY unaccountable silence must have surprised you, but my motions depending on other people I have been kept till this day under a total uncertainty when I should be permitted to leave London. To-day I have at length

received permission to shake the dust from my feet against this precious city, and to-morrow I hope to set forward. Sunday and Monday I intend to spend at Rokeby Park, near Greta Bridge, with my friend Morritt, and on Tuesday I resume my journey.

Now if I thought there was hope of carrying you with us to Edinburgh I would be at Keswick on Tuesday night for certain, and as there is no one but Mrs. Scott and myself, we could have the pleasure of your company in the snuggest way possible. But if this confounded visitor of yours[1] (I beg his pardon) has really arrived so *mal à propos* as to interrupt all prospect of what I have so much at heart, I fear I must proceed by Penrith to Carlisle without leaving the great road; for as I could only stay a night at Keswick, my presence in Edin^r^ being more than needful, it would hardly be worth while to make a detour for so very short a visit. Pray write to me by return of post, addressed care of *John Bacon Morritt, Esq^re^, Rokeby Park, Greta Bridge*, which will decide my motions. If, as I would fain flatter myself, we are destined to meet, I have much to say to you about the *Quarterly Review, Rhadamanthus*, etc. etc. I do not apprehend there is any great risque of our politics differing where there are so many strings in unison, but it may doubtless happen. Meanwhile every one is grateful for your curious and invaluable articles,[2] and this leads to a subject which I would rather have spoken than written upon, but the doubt of seeing you obliges me to touch on it. George Ellis and I have both seen a strong desire in Mr. Canning to be of service to you in any way within his power that could be pointed out, and this without any reference to political opinions. An official situation in his own department was vacant, and I believe is still so. This he meant to offer you, but it

[1] Southey's friend Danvers.

[2] In the *Quarterly*, of which the second No. had just been published.

occurred to Geo. Ellis and me that the salary, £300, was inadequate for an office occupying much time, inferring constant attendance. But there are professors' chairs both in England and Scotland frequently vacant, and there is hardly one, unless such as are absolutely professional, for which you are not either fitted already, or capable of making yourself so, on short notice. There are, besides, diplomatic and other situations, should you prefer them to the groves of Academe. In short, I think you will be unjust to yourself and your family if you neglect to avail yourself of an opportunity of becoming a little more independent of the Row, which has been rarely so handsomely presented to any literary character. Mr. Canning's opportunities to serve you will soon be numerous or they will be gone altogether,[1] for he is of a different mould from some of his colleagues, and a decided foe to these half measures which I know you detest as much as I do. It is not his fault that the cause of Spain is not at this moment triumphant; this I know, and there will come a time when the world will know it too. Meanwhile all this is strictly confidential. Think over the thing in your own mind, and let it if possible determine you on your northern journey. What would I not give to secure you a chair in our Northern Metropolis![2] We will talk the matter over together. I should write to Geo. Ellis upon your

[1] About three months later (Sept. 21st) Canning fought a duel with his colleague Castlereagh—mainly on account of the Walcheren Expedition. This led to the retirement of the Duke of Portland, Castlereagh, and Canning when a Ministry was formed under Perceval in November.

[2] Judging from Southey's opinions of Scotland after his visit in 1805, he would not have been happy in a Scottish University; for he wrote 'Of Edinburgh society I think very little. Jeffrey is amusing from his wit; in taste he is a mere child, and he affects to despise learning because he has none.' . . 'I really cannot feel angry with anything so diminutive; he is a mere *homunculus*, and would do for a major in Gog and Magog's army, were they twice as little.' Compared with Coleridge and Wordsworth, 'the Scotch *literatuli* are very low indeed.' . . 'We were three days at Scott's,—a much

wishes, as he enjoys Mr. Canning's entire confidence. I ought in conscience to have made ten thousand pretty detours about all this, and paid some glowing compliments both to the Minister and the Bard; but they may be all summed up by saying in one sober word, that Mr. C. could not have entertained a thought more honourable to himself, and knowing him as I do, I must add more honourable and flattering to your genius and learning.

Mrs. Scott joins in kindest compliments to Mrs. Southey.—Remember me kindly to Wordsworth if within reach. WALTER SCOTT.[1]

TO THE SAME.

16*th July* 1809.

. . . I LONG for Gifford's answer to your proposal; he is the laziest of editors. Your *Alderman*[2] is delightful. I am surprised, with your turn for dialogue, that you never tried the Drama. We have, or are about to have, a very nice theatre at Edin^r^, about which as a trustee for the public (a thankless task) I have been lately busying myself. Should you ever produce a Drama, I think we will by and bye be able to do more than these immense London Stages, fit only for pantomime and raree-show. As for Queen Orraca, I grieve for her being printed, for half my fame as a minstrel reciter depends upon her, and the other half on a very clever ballad[3] of Lady Louisa Stuart.

superior man, whom it is impossible not to like.' Pleased with him, with Johnny Armstrong's Castle, pleased with Teviotdale, with the Tweed and the Yarrow, astonished at Edinburgh. 'Delighted with Melrose. Sick of Presbyterianism, and above all things, thankful that I am an Englishman and not a Scotsman.'—*Selections*, vol. i. p. 342, etc.; *Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 351.

[1] A portion of this letter has been printed in Southey's *Life and Correspondence*, vol. iii. pp. 236-7.

[2] "I have sent Ballantyne *Queen Orraca* and the *Alderman's Funeral* for a miscellaneous collection which he is making."—Southey to his brother, ii. p. 154.

[3] The ballad on "Ugly Meg" of Elibank, for which Chas. K. Sharpe made the humorous sketch now at Abbotsford.

But I cannot set my private renown in competition with the public advantage. I think it will be an invaluable acquisition for the *Minstrelsy*.

TO MORRITT.

ASHESTIEL, SELKIRK, 22*nd July* [1809].

YOUR letter, my dear Morritt, reached me just as I was relieved of the load of business which had been accumulating during my absence in London, and which—though as Johnson said, when I set myself doggedly to it I can work as hard as any man—well nigh stunned and overwhelmed me. I have however wrought my way hitherward, and honest Christian in the *Pilgrim's Progress* never felt more relieved when his burthen dropped from him and rolled into the sepulchre, than I did this moment. I need not say how warmly Charlotte and I recollect all the hospitality of Portland Place and Rokeby. It is a cruel thing that there is more than a day's journey between us, for that would be easily dashed through; yet the distance cannot be immense, for we dined here at three o'clock the day after we left Rokeby, so that assuredly ought to be no insurmountable bar to our meeting again. I am much surprised at the rejection of your excellent article on Warburton, but a good deal happened when I was in London to shew me that Gifford wants much of that tact which is necessary to conduct with spirit the work he has undertaken. It was with some difficulty that Ellis and I prevailed for the admission of the Austrian article that saved the last number.[1] There is a lame and cowardly caution which prepares all the world for the defeat of the combatant who exhibits such a suspicious symptom. When the sword was once drawn I would have hurled the scabbard into Thames. But I was not held worthy to advise,

[1] Austrian State Papers in No. 2, understood to have been written by Sharon Turner and Canning.

at least not listened to upon that topic. I will, I think, write once more and very fully to Gifford, but it shall be for the last time. Not that I will withdraw my own feeble assistance while a limb of the thing sticks together, but I will not subject myself to give my friends the trouble of labouring in vain. All Gifford's excellent talent, and no less excellent principle, will do little to save the *Review* unless he will adopt a more decisive tone of warfare and greater energy in his mode of conducting it. It is a thousand pities, and I would gnaw my nails off to see so excellent a design miscarry, but what can be done? I have not had a line either from Gifford or the Bookseller since I came down, and as it is vulgarly said that proffered service is of an evil savour, sure am I that proffered advice is still less to be endured by human nostrils. After all, I believe the best way will be to advise with George Ellis, whose judgment and knowledge of mankind may find a remedy where perhaps I should only aggravate the evil.

Would to heaven you were here or I were at Rokeby on this numerical summer's day. Ashestiel never looked so enchanting; the ground is quite enamelled with wild flowers, and all living things in such high spirits as to withdraw one involuntarily from thinking of all warfare and foemen, even from Bonaparte down to the *Edinburgh Reviewers*. . . .

And now, dear Morritt, let me claim from you your promise that I should have the Highland Tale for my next edition of the *Minstrelsy*. It is going to press in a few days, but as of course you will be placed among the Imitations you may take your own time for transcription and correction.[1] I wish you would also give me a sonnet for a certain pocket selection,—a minstrelsy which I picked out for my friend Ballantyne.[2] I think you will

[1] *The Curse of Moy*, by Mr. Morritt, appeared in the new edition of the *Border Minstrelsy*.

[2] *The English Minstrelsy*, in 2 vols. 12mo, was published in 1810.

like the choice of the ancient things, and I wanted to add a few modern pieces *hactenus inedita.* I intend to give him two or three trifles of my own, and to exercise all the interest I possess among my poetical friends. The work will make two beautifully printed pocket volumes.

I have written a few lines to Lady Louisa to beg she will look in upon Ashestiel on her journey to Bothwell. Do pray say the best you can for us; we lie alike in the way.

Charlotte joins in kindest love to Mrs. and Miss Morritt. I have not forgotten my promise about the pirates' ditty, though I have not yet had time enough to write it out. I hope Lady Hood, if she goes north, will come by Ashestiel. —Believe me, dear Morritt, ever yours in faith and sincerity while WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY LOUISA STUART.

ASHESTIEL, *July* 1809.

As I find you are now at Rokeby on your way to Bothwell, will your Ladyship permit me to remind you that whether you seek Clydesdale by Peebles or by Edinburgh, you must necessarily pass within a mile of this small farm, which will, without pretending to any great matters, rather furnish a better *gîte* than any of the Inns on the road; and the reckoning shall be that your Ladyship puts up with your hard quarters for a day or two, and honours some of our wonders with a visit. I feel myself so assured that you will honour us so far that I will give you the *carte du pays.*

If your Ladyship leaves Rokeby without making any visit in Cumberland, two days' easy travelling will bring your post-chaise to Ashestiel on the second evening. It is seven miles from Selkirk, and just so far on the road either to Edinburgh or to Bothwell. Elibank Castle has a claim on your Ladyship for the honour you have already done to the tale of Walter of Harden's wed-

ding.[1] Newark and the braes of Yarrow are also worth seeing, even if the last were not classical ground in Scottish song. There is very little, or rather no chance of our being from home, but to make assurance doubly sure, a note addressed Ashestiel, by Selkirk, will apprise us when your Ladyship can grant our request. I need not, I am sure, say that Charlotte joins her respectful solicitations to mine, as well as in best love to Mr. and Mrs. Morritt. . . .

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ASHESTIEL, *8th August* 1809.

I DO not know, my dear Lady Abercorn, how you are justified in your cruel treatment of me. It is now a very long time since I have heard from you, and I have written you two long epistles filled with all the news, good, bad, and indifferent, which I thought likely to interest you. I directed as usual under cover to the Marquis, so I think my letters cannot have miscarried, unless his Lordship has intercepted them for literary curiosities to be bound with his history of Reynard the Fox. Seriously, I hope my letter from town has reached you, for it was written by special command of Lady Maria, whom I had the pleasure to see several times during three months' abode in London. I was quite mortified that the Priory was untenanted, for I had a thousand things to tell your Ladyship, besides the delight of exchanging a lodging in Half Moon Street, Piccadilly, for the groves and glades of the Priory. We (for I was in the plural number, my wife and myself) saw enough of London gaiety to make us very glad to regain our own fireside, regretting nothing so much as not having had it in our power to make our devoirs to Lord and Lady Abercorn.

I was several times at Kensington, where her R. H.

[1] See note, p. 137.

made several inquiries concerning your Ladyship, and was surprised that I could not satisfy them; so this plucked another plume from my vanity. I also saw Lady Charlotte Lindsay repeatedly.

We spent some days at Tunbridge with Sir Samuel and Lady Hood. Her Ladyship is my countrywoman, an enthusiastic Highlander, and deep in all manner of northern tradition. On my return I visited Knowle,[1] and saw a gallery which I admired more than all the fine collections I have seen in London. Your Ladyship is probably no stranger to it. It contains an amazing collection of original portraits of eminent historical characters from the reign of Henry VII. downwards.

Since your Ladyship has made so long stay in Ireland, I hope you don't propose to return before next summer, because I have very serious thoughts of visiting green Erin next year, with a view to make my edition of Swift as perfect, and as much worthy of the permission of inscribing it to Lord A. as I possibly can. I have been tolerably successful in some of my researches, and still hope I may add something to illustrate the works of so celebrated a classic. . . .

Adieu, my dear Lady Abercorn, and pray write to me soon, were it only to say you have not quite forgot your very faithful and most respectful

Walter Scott.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

Ashestiel, *August* 15, 1809.

I have delay'd writing to you from day to day in hope of being able to report progress about the delightful

[1] Knole or Knowle, near Sevenoaks, Kent. This picturesque example of a fine old English house, covering five acres, is said to have been given by Queen Elizabeth to her trusty minister the first Earl of Dorset, and after three centuries is still in possession of the Sackvilles.

'Legend' more fully than I am even yet supplied with the means of doing. For indeed all I can say is that our manager, young Siddons, is delighted with the piece, and determined to bring it out with as much force as he can possibly muster; but his wife and he went to perform at Manchester, and I left town before their return (if it has yet taken place), so that I really have not had opportunity to procure those *practical* remarks which I expect his experience may enable him to suggest. I am concerned at this, because, of course, the sooner you are possessed of them the more time you will have to consider any of them that may merit your attention. I have shewn the play to Erskine,[1] whose best pretension to such distinction, though he has many, is his early and decided preference of your dramatic works to all others of every age and country, Shakespeare himself hardly excepted. But neither from him have I got more than general and unqualified expressions of satisfaction and pleasure. As I did not get your letter till I was safely landed, I did not consult Mr. Mackenzie.[2] Indeed, I was willing to have young Siddons' remarks, which may be really of consequence, before those of any other person, and for that purpose intrusted him with the manuscript. Mr. Mackenzie is, however, a most excellent critic on dramatic composition, and shall be the first person to whom I show it so soon as I go to town. There is a point of some little consequence which has not occurred to your recollection, namely, how I am to arrange with Siddons about the profits of the piece, which, if the play succeeds (as it cannot chuse but succeed splendidly), must necessarily be an object of considerable importance; he expresses himself willing to pay a sum of money, which I declined for the present, referring myself to your future instructions. I believe it will be better to abide by the

[1] William Erskine, afterwards Lord Kinedder.

[2] Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*.

Author's rights, which, supposing the piece to run nine nights and so forth, cannot be less than about £300 or £400. This is what I should prefer in my own case, because I should then, in any event, neither have to reproach myself with making a foolish bargain for myself nor with taking the Manager in by vain expectations. There is a circumstance rather favourable to the effect upon the stage arising from the contrast between the tartan worn by the Macleans, which has a red glaring effect, and that of the Campbells, which is dark green; thus the followers of the Chieftains will be at once distinguished from each other. I think your answer to Lady Louisa's criticism upon Herbert's departure from the Castle is quite convincing. But as the objection staggered me a good deal, and may occur to others, you will perhaps think of adding a line or two stating, as an additional reason for his departure, that his friends had no occasion for his aid in prosecuting their revenge. He is a most delightful character, the most interesting stage lover I have the honour to be acquainted with, so we must leave no blot on his scutcheon, nor even the appearance of one. I fear all this while you have been thinking me little better than the "fause Sir John"[1] whom you previously intrusted with the Legend, but I hope soon to send you all the remarks which can possibly occur as essential. Ballantyne the printer, whom I think you may have seen at my house, came here on Sunday last; Siddons had shown him some parts of the MS., as they are on most intimate habits, and expressed himself even more warmly than to me on the subject. Now I like this excessively, for there is no

[1] In 1803 Sir John Sinclair requested Joanna Baillie to write a drama for a charitable purpose, at the same time sending her a plan for one on *The Fall of Darius*! Curiously enough, in consequence of this absurd proposal, the *Family Legend* was written.—See Sir John's *Correspondence*, London, 1831, vol. i. pp. 167-170, and present vol. pp. 211-12.

saying how far a real and warm interest in a part may warm even a very middling performance; he has a bad way of planting his legs in attitudes which make me wish them broken on the wheel; however, he is a good, worthy young man, and much of a gentleman. The theatre will, I think, be quite a Bijou; we supped in it as Corri's rooms[1] on the night of the memorable Oxonian ball. It is intended to be only temporary, but I wish the trustees would buy it outright and fit it up as a permanent theatre, for I doubt our being able to raise £20,000 to build a new one, and between our pride and our poverty the scheme may be left in the same state as the new College. . . .—Believe me honoured in permission to subscribe myself your affectionate and unworthy brother in the Muse, WALTER SCOTT.

TO MORRITT.

17*th August* 1809.

. . . I HAVE a letter from Gifford, the first time I have heard from him since I have left London. I really tremble for the fate of the *Quarterly*. Gifford is able and good-humoured, and most heartily zealous, and yet I fear he will not succeed in making a cake of the right leaven for the present generation. I will not take to the boat, however, while the ship holds together, and so I will open on your friend Mrs. Montagu's *Letters*,[2] which are well worthy to be pelted out of the field. . . .

I snap at your offer of the translations from Metastasio like a dog at a buttered crust. The version of *Ti severvai di mi* is exquisitely beautiful, but as beggars must not be chusers, I refer myself to the ladies to chuse which they

[1] The present Theatre at the head of Leith Walk is built on the site of Corri's rooms, which were used by Siddons until March 1811, when he obtained possession of the house in Shakspeare Square.

[2] If Scott wrote an article on Mrs. Montagu's *Letters* it did not appear in the *Quarterly*, but the Second Series, published in 1813, was reviewed in No. 19.

think will do the *Miscellany* most honour. There is a trifle I intend to send,—a pitiful sonnet wrote in former days to my mistress's eyebrow, or rather eyelid, after it had wept itself dry—

> "The violet in her summer bower,
> Where birchen boughs with hazels mingle,
> May boast herself the fairest flower
> In glen or copse or forest dingle."[1]

etc. etc. . . .

TO SOUTHEY.

ASHESTIEL, 10*th September* 1809.

SINCE I heard last from you I have been enjoying myself *al fresco* on the banks of Loch Lomond, which (no offence) could put Derwentwater into its waistcoat-pocket. Moreover, I met with an old follower of Rob Roy, who had been at many a spreagh (foray) with that redoubted freebooter, and shewed me all his holds. On my return I found the enclosed from Ellis, which I think is worth the double postage which, failing a frank, it is like to cost you. He is an excellent and warm-hearted friend, and I long to make you acquainted side by side, as I believe three folks, even the three graces, cannot be said to meet face to face. When I see Geo. Canning and Geo. Ellis most anxious about the prosperity of Robert Southey, and remember former days, it reminds me of—

> *Via salutis,*
> *Quod minime reris, Graia pandetur ab urbe.*[2]

I am convined that what Swift said of Whig and Tory is true of most civil dissensions, and that the really honest only require to know each other's sentiments to agree, while knaves and fools invent catchwords and shibboleths and war-cries to keep them from coming to a just understanding. I thought it by far the

[1] For the Poem complete, and its origin, see *Lockhart's Life*, vol. i. pp. 332-6.

[2] Virgil's *Æneid*, vi. 96.

best way in a negotiation of some delicacy, that Ellis and Canning should know your own precise statement of your views and politics, which strained through another medium than that of your own manly and independent expressions might have suffered in strength, spirit, and precision. I intend to answer Ellis, pressing the augmentation of the pension as a mode of cutting short dependence. It may be resigned when the Historiographer's place[1] (for which you are so peculiarly fitted) shall open to you, or any preferment suitable to your wishes in emolument and in the nature of its duty.[2] You will see that Ellis agrees with you and me in Spanish matters. Alas, alas, an evil fate seems to arm the enemy with weapons not his own, and disconcert every effort in that glorious cause. God for his own wise ends has sent confusion into all councils that are formed against the destined scourge of his wrath, "appall'd the guilty and made mad the free."[3] How it is to end heaven knows; I who am by nature no croaker hardly dare venture to conjecture.

Don't tease yourself or Paternoster about the Morte d'Arthur, but take your own time. My idea was entirely different from yours, to reprint namely the whole from the only original Caxton which is extant, with all the superstition and harlotrie which the castrator in the reign of Edward VI. chose to omit. A classic of Henry VII^th's time is so valuable that I still think once you have been afloat for a year or two, I will give a very limited edition

[1] Louis Dutens, who died in 1812, was historiographer to King George III. The office appears then to have been given to the Rev. J. S. Clarke.

[2] In allusion to this remark, Southey says, in a letter to Walter Savage Landor: "About two months ago some offers of service were made to me by Canning, through Ellis and Scott. They do him credit, because my opinions are pretty well known, and if they have done me no good, that is not his fault, as he has no longer the power of redeeming them. I asked to be made historiographer."—Southey, *Selections*, vol. ii. p. 167.

[3] "Make mad the guilty and appal the free."—*Hamlet*, Act ii. Sc. 2.

of Sir Thomas Malory in his native dress. But this is a distant vision.

I like your missionary article exceedingly, and I think you will join with me in admiring the beautiful conclusion of the last Review on Spanish affairs. But we must have a little fun in our next, for which purpose I intend to play football with Mrs. Montagu's *Letters*.[1] I think Lord Valentia is rather unfair to Bruce;[2] I know that surly Patagonian, and though he may have romanced in matters where his own prowess was concerned, yet I think no one could ever have described the battles of Serbraxos and the strange dispersion which afterwards took place, without having seen it. Gen[l] Murray saw two Abyssinians in Upper Egypt at the time of the Indian army's being there, the elder of whom remembered Bruce as the commander of the Koscob Horse, and he remarked that although they did not always immediately recollect circumstances mentioned by the traveller, yet such frequently recurred to their recollection, with all their particulars, a day or two afterwards. I therefore think the negative evidence as to his warlike and princely character good for little. Even with our newspapers and gazettes, who pretends to remember all who have been made peers and knighted; and as for fighting, a prince who left Bruce at home, if he could have brought him out, neglected the most able-bodied associate you ever saw. Pendragon was a joke to him in size and muscle.

By the way, Ellis fixes on me an article about Miss Edgeworth's *Tales*, which I never saw; I have nothing in the last *Review*; yours ever, WALTER SCOTT.

[1] See note, p. 145.

[2] In the third number of the *Quarterly* Southey had two papers —one on South Sea missions, the other an elaborate account of the travels of Lord Valentia, who questioned the truth of some of the statements made by Bruce regarding Abyssinia. Southey agreed with Lord Valentia, but the truthfulness of the great traveller has since been fully vindicated.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ASHESTIEL, 14*th September* 1809.

YOUR valued token of remembrance, my dear Lady Marchioness, found me a traveller in the skirts of our Highlands, and consequently did not receive quite so early an acknowledgment as if I had been quiet at home. I had promised to meet the Judge of Admiralty, Sir William Scott, near Loch Lomond, but behold he received an express announcing his lady's sudden decease. . . .

The sight of our beautiful mountains and lakes (though not new to me), and your Ladyship's kind exhortations, have set me to threading verses together, with what success I am yet uncertain; but if I am not able to please myself at all, it is but a step to the fireside, and the poem will go into smoke, like half the projects of this world. Then, says caution, you hazard any little credit you have acquired, and may disgrace the good opinion of your friends by venturing again on the public arena; to which resolution replies, in the words of the great Marquis of Montrose—

> "He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his deserts are small;
> Who dares not put it to the touch
> To win or lose it all."

The worst is, I am not very good or patient in slow and careful composition, and sometimes remind myself of a drunken man who could run long after he could not walk. I must however invoke the assistance of my friendly critics, and particularly of the Marquis, when my manuscript is in such forwardness as to admit of its being presented for his inspection. Your Ladyship will recollect that he is to have an interest in it as patron in case it succeeds, so it will be for his Lordship's credit that as few errors remain in it as possible. . . .

I saw the Princess several times when in London. She was in the highest possible spirits, and very witty and entertaining. Lewis[1] was of all her parties, an acquaintance which her Royal Highness had acquired when I was in London. Of course I was only a second-rate conjuror, but did my best to amuse her. The P[rince] did me the honour to speak of me in terms of considerable bitterness before I came up to town, so I have no chance of being the Poet Laureate of the next reign. It is curious how every word of such a personage is caught up and repeated to those whom it concerns; a circumstance that ought to make them peculiarly cautious, for although few people can do them real service, the meanest have it often in their power to do them essential injury. But I can never wish his father's son and the heir of the Crown otherwise than well, and am as safe in my obscurity from the effects of his prejudice as a worm beneath a stone from the foot of Goliath of Gath.

The Duchess of Gordon is at Kinrara, her Highland farm, where I have heard she shows to greater advantage than anywhere, being more sedate and less overpowering. I daresay she cares very little about the issue of her Caro sposo's affair.[2] . . . I saw him in Edinburgh in summer, and it seemed to sit very light on his spirits. I spent two days at the Duke of Montrose's seat near Loch Lomond very pleasantly, the more so as Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart (Lord Bute's sister), both my special cronies, were in the house. We went daily on the lake in a very nice boat, with ten Highland rowers, "all plaided and plumed in their tartan array," and visited every island that was interesting.

[1] Matthew Gregory Lewis, Scott's old friend in the "Tales of Terror" days. Lewis died in 1818.

[2] An unpleasant charge which ultimately came before the King's Bench, Dec. 7, 1809. The Duke was acquitted.

I will endeavour if possible to come to Ireland before your Ladyship leaves it. The business of the Judicature Commission may indeed stop me, or perhaps the whole before that time may have passed into other hands, and I shall be a gentleman at large.—I ever am, dear Lady Abercorn, your much obliged, very faithful, humble servant, WALTER SCOTT.

FROM ROBERT SURTEES.

I HAVE only one record to offer of the appearance of our Northumbrian Duergar.[1] My narratrix is Elizabeth Cockburn, an old wife of Offerton in this county, whose credit in a case of this kind will not, I hope, be much impeached when I add that she is, by her dull neighbours, supposed to be occasionally insane; but by herself to be at those times endowed with a faculty of seeing visions and spectral appearances which shun the common ken. In the year before the great rebellion two young men from Newcastle were sporting on the high moors above Elsdon, and after pursuing their game several hours, sat down to dine in a green glen, near one of the mountain streams. After their repast, the younger lad ran to the brook for water; and after stooping to drink, was surprised on lifting his head again by the appearance of a brown dwarf,[2] who stood on a crag covered with bracken, across the burn. This extraordinary personage did not appear to be above half the stature of a common man, but was uncommonly stout and broad built, having the appearance of vast strength. His dress was entirely brown, the colour of the brackens, and his head covered with frizzled red hair! his

[1] Duerwe, Duergh, Droich, etc. etc., a term for dwarf.—*See* Jamieson.

[2] "The Brown man of the moor that stays
Beneath the heather bell."
For a further illustration of this superstition, see *Forest Sketches*, Edinburgh, 1865 (written by William Robertson, Sheriff-Substitute at Tobermory), the grim story of the Gillie and the "Protector of the Deer."

countenance was expressive of the most savage ferocity, and his eyes glared like a bull.

It seems he addressed the young man, first threatening him with his vengeance for having trespassed on his demesnes, and asking him if he knew in whose presence he stood. The youth replied that he supposed him to be Lord of the Moors; that he had offended through ignorance, and offered to bring him the game he had killed. The dwarf was a little mollified by this submission, but remarked that nothing could be more offensive to him than such an offer, as he considered the wild animals as his subjects, and never failed to avenge their destruction. He condescended further to inform him that he was, like himself, mortal, though of years far exceeding the lot of common humanity, and (what I should not have an idea of) that he hoped for salvation. He never, he added, fed on anything that had life, but lived in the summer on whortle-berries, and in the winter on nuts and apples, of which he had great store in the woods.

Finally he invited his new acquaintance to accompany him home, and partake his hospitality, an offer which the youth was on the point of accepting, and was just going to spring across the brook (which, if he had done, says Elizabeth, the dwarf would certainly have torn him in pieces) when his foot was arrested by the voice of his companion, who thought he tarried long, and on looking around again "the wee brown man was fled." The story adds, he was imprudent enough to slight the admonition and to sport over the moors on his way homewards; but soon after his return he fell into a lingering disorder and died within the year.

TO ROBERT SURTEES.

. . . YOUR brown man of the Muirs is a noble fellow. He has been brooding in my brain this many a day, and is,

I think, the genuine descendant of the ancient Duergar. I hope soon to show you something of him in romantic poetry. . . .

The story of Barthram put me in mind of a little incident I met with many years ago, riding out of Liddesdale into Teviotdale. There were then no roads of any kind in that direction, so to avoid the bogs we kept upon the banks of a little brook, which acted as a drain to the springy morasses, and now and then afforded a little recess in which its waters wimpled under birches and alders, and its banks formed a narrow and retired glen.

In one of these we found a small stone cross lying among the grass and heather. It was thrown down from its pedestal, but not broken, and bore a broad sword and a pair of wool shears. On the opposite side were two initial letters and two others lower down. The monument was obviously sepulchral; it was so small that with the united strength of a friend and of my servant I easily set it on end, where it may stand for aught I know to this moment. We could hear no tradition about the place, probably because we did not light upon those who could have answered our inquiries. As the spot is not two miles distant from the Chapel of Hermitage Castle, it seems probable the place of sepulture was chosen from some reason similar to that which occurs in the ballad of Bartram. . . .[1]

TO LADY LOUISA STUART.

ASHESTIEL, *7th November* [1809].

. . . I HAVE not been quite idle, though I don't know if your Ladyship will think I have been employed to good purpose when I tell you I have made great progress in the

[1] This accidental discovery of the stone cross made Scott more easily deceived in the genuineness of Bartram's Dirge. For complete letters see pp. 81, 82, 94-5, *Memoir of Robert Surtees*, Surtees Society, 1852.

romance I showed you at Buchanan. It is against all my vows to write poetry again, but I hope the perjuries of bards are as venial as those of lovers are said to be. After all, how can I employ my time? My family have some claims on my talent, or half talent or whatever it is, for it laid me on the shelf as a professional man, when I had as good prospects as my neighbours. And here I have a reversionary office saddled with the life-rent of an old gentleman who has learned Comte de Grammont's art *d'éterniser sa vie*. . . . So upon the whole I will go on with my *Lady of the Lake*, and tell my prudence she is no better than indolence in disguise. . . .

TO MRS. THOMAS SCOTT.[1]

Dec. 27, 1809.

The death of poor Miss Hume has shocked my mother less than I anticipated; old age is fortunate, if not in decay of sensibility, at least in the increase of patience under these afflictions, and Miss Hume's, notwithstanding her great age, was so long, lingering, and painful, that we all regarded her death as a release. I take the liberty to enclose a bill for a small sum which I hope you will consider as a Christmas gift to little Walter,[2] to whom pray make my compliments. . . .

The Christmas parties go on as usual, and "commerce" takes its nightly round without mercy. I would to heaven Bonaparte would include that most stupid game in his anti-commercial edicts. I am glad to hear my little nephew takes so kindly to the church. What do you think to make an English parson of him? it is a line in

[1] Mr. Lockhart in his abridged edition of the *Life*, published in August 1848, has this tribute to the memory of his wife's aunt:—

"Mrs. Thomas Scott, Miss Macculloch of Ardwell, was one of the best and wisest and most agreeable women I have ever known. She had a motherly affection for all Sir Walter's family, and she survived them all. She died at Canterbury in April 1848, aged 72."—P. 110.

[2] "Little Walter" of the *Journal*, afterwards General Scott.

which if I live I might do him good service, and he might come to be Bishop of Sodor and Man. If I do not go to London in spring I shall be tempted to go to Ireland, taking your Islet in my way, and will borrow Walter's pony to see your wonders. My Walter is at the High School, and I condescend to hear him his lessons every day. Poor old Dr. Adam died last week after a very short illness, which first affected him in school. He was light-headed, and continued to speak as in the class until the very last, when, having been silent for many hours, he said, "That Horace was very well said; *you* did not do it so well," then added faintly, "But it grows dark, very dark, the *boys may dismiss*," and with these striking words he expired. He is to be buried on Friday, the classes attending under their masters. It will be very difficult to fill up his situation. . . .[1]

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINR., 31*st December* 1809.

. . . AND now as to my own occupation, which for this month past has been incessant. The Commissioners under the King's warrant for reporting upon alterations in the Scottish Judicature have, like every other body that I know, left all their work to be done just at the time they were called upon to make their report; so now we have to work very hard, and the poor Secretary has hardly a moment to call his own from nine in the morning till the same hour at night. But I expect it will be all over in the course of a few weeks, and that I shall have time to renew my literary labours.

I have made considerable progress in a new poem, which I intend to call *The Lady of the Lake*. The scene

[1] Alexander Adam, the learned author of *Roman Antiquities*, etc. A fine portrait of this born teacher and amiable gentleman, by Raeburn, is now one of the ornaments of the National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

is laid in the Perthshire Highlands, which after all present the finest part of our mountain prospects. I have taken considerable pains on what I have written, and shall be anxious to solicit Lord Abercorn's opinion upon it, because, should it be honoured with his approbation, I hope he will permit me to inscribe it to him.

Pray, does your Ladyship know Lord Clarendon? I ask this question because he has volunteered a correspondence with me in a manner very flattering to my vanity, so that I am a little curious with respect to him. I don't think I ever heard of him about town, and I have an idea that he is in his domestic habits extremely retired. But all this perhaps your Ladyship can tell me.

What do you think of this new sort of amusement that the public have found for themselves at Covent Garden? I *hate* mobs of all kinds, but I *fear* disciplined mobs, especially with such leaders as *Clifford*,[1] who has just knowledge enough to keep him within the verge of law, talent enough to do mischief, and no capacity whatever to do the least good. I pity poor John Kemble and his little wife, whom I met at the Priory. Yet they played their cards ill in attempting to bully the audience. I am not a believer in the continuance of the truce: the love of frolic will revive on the slightest provocation, and there are so many people who can sound horns and dance upon benches that such provocation will be taken whether it be given or no.

Perhaps I am a little too gloomy upon so foolish a topic, but I think the whole scene is a public and general disgrace to the country. Neither am I greatly delighted with the present prospect into the interior of the cabinet,

[1] Mr. Clifford, a London barrister, who took a leading part in the so called "O.P. [old-price] Riots," which continued from Sept. to Dec.—67 nights—and were caused by the prices of admission to the newly reconstructed Theatre being raised.—See *Covent Garden Journal*, 2 vols. 8vo, 1809.

which reminds me of that which presented itself to a wise man of Gotham, who, carrying half-a-dozen game-cocks to the place where a main was to be fought, shut them up in the same coop, and was surprised to find that they had fought and killed each other, because he thought they should have known that they were all on the same side. Canning is, I fear, lost irrecoverably to Government, and it will be difficult to keep ground in the House of Commons without him. He sometimes writes to me, and you would laugh to see how frankly I offer my advice to him in return, stoutly exhorting adherence to his old friends.

The Duchess of Gordon stayed here a day or two on her road to Ireland, and gave a grand party to all the world, which Charlotte and I attended. I rather wonder that your viceroy[1] has not contrived to parry this visitation from *la chère maman*. She is not, begging her Grace's pardon, altogether that conciliatory sort of person that is best calculated to endure, and to restrain and to mitigate, all the little heart-burnings which must arise in every court whether regal or vice-regal.

So you did not keep my friend Robert Dundas[2] with you, which I cannot but say I rejoice at. His effectual interest must be in Scotland, and no one can carry Scotland that has not the command of the Board of Control, which is in a manner the key of the corn-chest; for your Ladyship knows all our live articles of exportation are our black-cattle and our children, and though England furnishes a demand for our quadrupeds, we are forced to send our bipeds as far as Bengal. . . .

FROM LORD MINTO.[3]

I am particularly happy in having fixed Leyden by

[1] Charles, 4th Duke of Richmond, was Lord Lieutenant at this date.

[2] The Hon. Robert Dundas was appointed Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant on April 13, but in the following November he was again President of the Board of Control.

[3] This extract from a letter which

my side, and am enjoying with equal admiration, though of different kinds, his extraordinary talents and his spirited, independent, and estimable character. I have taken the best care I can of his fortunes, and hope one day to see his wandering staff planted in some Teviot haugh, and the wanderer himself under its shade resting in his age amongst the "Scenes of Infancy." Those scenes are the object of both our longings, I may safely say at least of mine, though it is not wise to strain either eyes or wishes at distant prospects. I shall hope to find you still haunting and singing those streams which are to me more sacred than the waters of the Ganges to their Hindoo votaries." . . .

reached Scott in the course of the year 1809, shows how soon after Lord Minto's arrival in India the Governor-General had recognised Leyden's genius and capacity for work.—*Ante*, p. 38.

CHAPTER VI

1810

EDINBURGH AND ASHESTIEL

"Dry up those tears," the gentle wizard cried,
"Nor weep while nature in her glory smiles!"
And lo! with sylvan mountains beautified,
Incumbent cliffs, lone bays, and fairy isles,
Floated a lake that I could scarce behold,
So bright it gleam'd with its enchanted waves!
While ever and anon wild music roll'd
From fractured rocks, and undiscover'd caves,
As if some spirit warbled from the steep
A low unearthly song, to charm the lake to sleep.

The Magic Mirror, by JOHN WILSON.

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1810—AGE 39

Joanna Baillie's *Family Legend* on the Edinburgh Stage, *January*.

Parliamentary Commission on Scotch Judicature dissolved, *Spring*.

Lady of the Lake published in 4to by Ballantyne & Co., *May*.

English Minstrelsy, 2 vols. 12mo, by Ballantyne & Co.

Visit to the Highlands and Islands with wife and daughter, *June*.

Miss Seward's Life and Poetical Works, 3 vols. post 8vo, published by Ballantyne, *August*.

Contributions to *Quarterly Review*—

Fatal Revenge
Evans' Old Ballads } in No. 6, May 1810

CHAPTER VI.

FROM LEYDEN.[1]

CALCUTTA, *January 10th*, 1810.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—It is not my intention to write you a letter at present, but merely a note to accompany a Dissertation on the Chinese language by Mr. Marshman, one of the missionaries of Serampore. This Dissertation is properly speaking only the preface of the first volume of *Confucius* in Chinese and English, printed at Serampore under the patronage of Lord Minto. As I had some effect in getting the work set afoot here while the missionaries were rather under a cloud, and not countenanced in any shape previous to his Lordship's arrival, they have requested me to make the work known to my literary friends at home, and I have of course forwarded this to you with the author's regards. The first volume of *Confucius* will follow in the next ship, and you will receive it before it is published in England. Lord Minto has gained himself immortal glory here by patronising with energy every useful species of literature, and is generally admitted to be the finest private character of a Governor that ever India saw. He is at present at Madras, where he has been for these five months, and where a very dangerous insurrection had very nearly broke out through the whole army, occasioned chiefly by the striking disproportion between civil and military employments. He has had a most delicate office to perform, and I am glad he has got so well through it. But to return to the Chinese

[1] The only letter from Leyden to Scott after the arrival of the former in India preserved in the Abbotsford collection.

Dissertation, which in my opinion is a very excellent one, I am anxious you should make it known among your literary friends; and if, as report says, you have any connection with the *Quarterly Review,* which has shown itself favourable to the missionaries, you cannot have a finer field for animadversion. The coincidence of the Chinese arrangement of sounds with the order of the Sanscrit alphabet is [not] a new discovery, but only an elucidation of De Guignes' *Mémoires* in the volumes (about the 30-35) of the Royal Academy.[1] This, however, will be merely as it suits your convenience.

Your *Marmion* is quite the rage here, and it is very dubious whether that or the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* is most so. He is a sad dog, this same Marmion; I have had the greatest difficulty in reconciling myself to him, and I am rather inclined to prefer old Bethlem Gabor after all, but I am nevertheless highly delighted with the work, though I have been wishing the hero hanged every step that he has taken from the beginning to the close. I most sincerely rejoice in seeing you very decidedly at the head of the poets of the age—*poetarum sæcli tui princeps*—which I think cannot now be denied, and, depend on it, none less than another Homer or Milton will shake you on your throne.

Brigadier-General Malcolm, whom I formerly mentioned from Eskdale, has you constantly under his pillow, and we rejoice over you like an ancient when a few of us Borderers can get together. He is gone to Persia to undo all the previous doings of that blockhead Sir Harford Jones. Now for myself, you will ask what the deuce I am about. Why, after enacting 'Belted Will' in November and December of 1808,[2] as I could not quite employ Jedburgh

[1] Académie des Sciences, tome xxxiv.

[2] As commissioner for the suppression of Dacoity. For the only popular account of Leyden's work in India, see an elaborate and judicious paper written by Dr. George Smith, C.I.E., in the *Calcutta Review,* vol. xxxi.

Justice, nearly a year has been taken up in trials, which have plagued me a great deal; but my judicial duties are not nearly so laborious as I found my magisterial, and I have been digging away like a Turkish galley-slave in the Oriental mines. However, I hope to get through some day, and I have made great progression in a history of Persian poetry, which will be at least two 4tos, if published; but really I am to be pitied as a *slave* more than any man in Frangistan,—I beg pardon, I meant Europe—for almost every instant of my time is filled up in task work. I had hoped that Colonel Richardson, a particular friend, would have before this given you a particular account of all my proceedings and feats, but I greatly fear he has finished his career, as well as the rest of the passengers in the missing ships,—and there withal goes to the devil all my precious and never enough to be regretted MSS. that had been transcribing for you and Heber for a year and more. My health is quite re-established, however, and I shall exert myself vigorously. But I am getting into a letter instead of a mere note (with a parcel). It is impossible, however, not to beg to be remembered to my dear Mrs. Scott, and the fact is that the Lasswade Cottage, the blazing ingle, etc., still recur as the happiest scenes of my youth. God bless you and your family, my dearest Scott, and reckon me ever yours, JOHN LEYDEN.[1]

[1] The following extract from a letter addressed to his wife by Lord Minto, written while on the expedition which was to be so fatal to Leyden, may be introduced here. See note, *ante*, p. 18:—

"*Modeste*, at sea, *May* 1811.—Dr. Leyden's learning is stupendous, and he is also a very universal scholar. His knowledge, extensive and minute as it is, is always in his pocket, at his fingers' ends, and on the tip of his tongue. He has made it completely his own, and it is all ready money. All his talent and labour, indeed, which are both excessive, could not, however, have accumulated such stores without his extraordinary memory. I begin, I fear, to look at that faculty with increasing wonder; I hope without envy, but something like one's admiration of young eyes. It must be confessed that Leyden has occasion for all the stores which application and memory can fur-

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINBURGH, 21st *January* 1810.

MY DEAR LADY AND FRIEND,—I was honoured two days ago with your kind token of remembrance enclosing Miss Owenson's[1] very pretty verses, to which I pay the highest compliment in admitting them to be worthy of the subject. I beg you will let Miss Owenson know with my respectful compliments that I did not write, and have scarcely even read, the review of *Ida of Athens*. My time has been indeed so very much occupied, that though a great admirer of novels, I have not perused one for many months; but I am sure that the authoress of the 'Irish Girl' can produce nothing deserving of severe criticism, and still more certain that no motive would have prevailed on me to give pain to female genius for the sake of showing my own supposed wit. The few essays I have made in the craft of reviewing are either

nish, to supply his tongue, which would dissipate a common stock in a week. I do not believe that so great a reader was ever so great a talker before. You may be conceited about yourselves, my beautiful wife and daughters, but with all my partiality I must give it against you. You would appear absolutely silent in his company, as a ship under weigh seems at anchor, when it is passed by a swifter sailer. Another feature of his conversation is a shrill, piercing, and at the same time grating voice. A frigate is not near large enough to place the ear at the proper point of hearing. If he had been at Babel he would infallibly have learned all the languages there, but in the end they must all have merged in the *Tividale How*, for not a creature would have *got spoken* but himself. I must say to his honour that he has as intimate and profound a knowledge of the geography, history, mutual relations, religion, character, and manners of every tribe in Asia, as he has of their language. On the present occasion there is not an island or petty state in the multitude of islands and nations amongst which we are going, of which he has not a tolerably minute and correct knowledge."—*Letters of Gilbert Elliot*, 1807-1814, pp. 253-255.

[1] Sydney Owenson, author of the *Wild Irish Girl*, etc., better known as Lady Morgan. She was visiting Lady Abercorn at Barons Court about this time, where she met Sir Charles Morgan, whose wife she became in 1812. The article on *Ida of Athens* in the first number of the *Quarterly* was understood to be from the pen of Gifford.

of a grave cast or refer to books which I could conscientiously praise. There are I think in the *Quarterly Review* only two exceptions. In the one case I was provoked by the insufferable petulance of the author, and in the other by the extreme want of candour of a certain author who, having loaded me in private with undesired and undesirable flattery, chose to abuse me without temptation or provocation in his next book. The worst of being supposed to review at all is that you get the reputation of writing a great number of articles which you have never even read, much less written.

Lord Melville left this country about the beginning of last month in high health and spirits: indeed, I have not seen him looking better for a long time, and as he practises the abstinence recommended, I hope he will enjoy a confirmed state of health for many years. I suspect he will go against the Ministry, at least *not with them,* in the stormy debates which are just approaching.[1] I grieve for it, and wish our friends on all sides would recollect the fable of the bundle of arrows which were so easily broken singly.

Perhaps we would [not] *quite* agree on the subject of George Canning, with whom I have been for years a good deal *lié*; but I think there would be no great difference between us. The want of Pitt's commanding genius is feelingly displayed by this wretched and impolitic squabbling among his friends.

You bid me, my dear friend, write verses for you and on friendship. Alas, I am scarcely at this moment fit to write verses for the Bellman's Christmas box. Above "Good morrow my Masters all, and a merry Christmas to you," I am sure I could not soar.

The pressure of the Commission business has been so constant, the meetings generally sitting from twelve till five, and the rest of my time spent in making up Minutes,

[1] Perceval's Administration had just been formed.

Reports, and other official duty, that I have never had a moment to put on my cap and bells. The enclosed jangling verses are the only effort I have made in rhyme since I came to Edinburgh for the winter. They were written within this hour, and are to be spoken to a beautiful tragedy of Joanna Baillie (authoress of the Plays on the Passions) founded upon a Highland story of the Old Time.[1] I am much interested in its success, as she intrusted the MS. with me. The principal female part is very prettily rehearsed by Mrs. Henry Siddons, our Manager's better half. Harry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*, writes an epilogue; so the piece, being entirely of Scotch manufacture, has, independent of its own merit, every chance of succeeding before a national audience. The day of trial is to-morrow. I want to send your Ladyship two little trumpery volumes of Miscellanies containing some scraps of my own, with others better worthy of your perusal,[2] which I begged and borrowed from some friends.

It is true my new ditty is sold, but the price is two thousand guineas, not pounds.[3] When I was fond of horses I learned from the jockey to sell by guineas and buy by pounds. It is a comfortable reflection that should the Whigs come in to-morrow, their gall and bitterness will be of little consequence to me. I have nothing fortunately which they can take away, and am able by the liberality of the public to wait calmly until I come to possession of my official income, which I believe will amount to £1100 a year.

I am very anxious the said poem should be such as Lord Abercorn can stand godfather to with credit. The tale cannot be very well sent without the verses, being

[1] *The Family Legend* — See Scott's *Poetical Works*, vol. viii. p. 387.

[2] *English Minstrelsy*, 2 vols.

[3] Lady Abercorn had written, "What do you get for it? The Irish papers say £2000! which I hope is true."

no great matter in itself; but I will soon send you a specimen, if not a whole canto. I have tried, according to promise, to make "a knight of love who never broke a vow." But well-a-day, though I have succeeded tolerably with the damsel, my lover, spite of my best exertions, is like to turn out what the players call a *walking gentleman*. It is incredible the pains it has cost me to give him a little dignity. Notwithstanding this, I have had in my time melancholy cause to paint from experience, for I gained no advantage from three years' constancy, except the said experience and some advantage to my conversation and manners. Mrs. Scott's match and mine was of our own making, and proceeded from the most sincere affection on both sides, which has rather increased than diminished during twelve years' marriage. But it was something short of love in all its forms, which I suspect people only *feel* once in their lives; folks who have been nearly drowned in bathing rarely venturing a second time out of their depth. Excuse this long and tedious prattle, and believe me, with respectful compliments to the Marquis, dear Lady Abercorn, your obliged and faithful humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

EDINBURGH, *February 6th*, 1810.

I WRITE these few lines to inform you that your laurels flourish in all their original verdure. Through this whole week the theatre has been fully attended, and by all the fashionable people in town; on Saturday in particular the house was as full as on Monday,—fuller was impossible,—and the most enthusiastic approbation was express'd in every quarter. All this while the *Legend* has been the only subject of town-talk, where praise and censure were of course mingled. The weight of criticism falls on the

head of Duart, and I observe that the fair critics in general think that he gives up the lady too easily. I begin heartily to wish that the play was printed, unless you think of bringing it out in London, and printed as you wrote it. If you think of this, you should only part with the property of a single edition, that you may afterwards include it in your works; my reasons are that the characters of Benlora, and especially Lochtarish, are so defaced by action that it is impossible to suppose their having the necessary influence upon Maclean's mind. Suppose we had never read Othello in our closet and saw Iago represented by a very bad actor, I suspect the same criticism would precisely apply. Yesterday I went with all my little folks, who were delighted, and cried like any little pigs over Helen's distress. . . .

Did I tell you that "Argyle" made a formal complaint of the flatness, as he supposed, of his exit on one occasion, and that I was obliged to indulge him by putting a cracker to the end of his squib, that he might go off upon the *grand pas*; he plays the character very well indeed. Mrs. Scott joins me in kindest remembrances to all.—Always, dear Madam, yours most faithfully and respectfully,

WALTER SCOTT.

The newspaper was not worth sending; Mrs. President Blair has requested the *Legend* for next Saturday; a large house is expected. I don't know what to say about alterations; I should like to see it printed from the original draught.[1]

TO LADY ABERCORN.

14*th March* 1810.

. . . LET me add how desirous I am your Ladyship should think well of these minstrel stanzas. The deuce

[1] Joanna Baillie's *Family Legend* was published in March 1810, printed from the MS. as originally written.

take my lover,—I can make nothing of him; he is a perfect automaton. It is very odd that the border blood seems to rise in my veins whenever I begin to try couplets, however torpid on other occasions. I am in my own person, as Hamlet says, *indifferent honest*, and a robber or captain of banditti never comes across me but he becomes my hero. I believe, had I been to write *Gil Blas*, Captain Rolando would have been the principal personage from beginning to end. But we are all as heaven made us, and if I come to see you in Ireland I will endeavour to avoid temptation, and *not* to become a leader of robbers in the Wicklow mountains, which I have a notion must be one of the most diverting preferments in the world. You will see what has led to this rhapsody, if the verses have reached you, for Black Sir Roderick, the leader of a predatory clan of Highlanders, is in danger, despite all my resolutions to the contrary, of becoming the very chief of the story.

You did not tell me if you exculpated me to your "wild Irish girl." Surely my apology was satisfactory. . . .

TO THE SAME.

EDINBURGH, 14*th April* 1810.

MY DEAR LADY ABERCORN,—I would long since have written to your Ladyship to thank you for all your kindness in my behalf, and to express how much I am pleased that Lord Abercorn, to whom I am about to write a few lines, likes his literary protégé. I am about to enclose the 3d and 4th cantos of the poem to Croker for a frank; the 5th is going through the press, and so soon as the 6th is achieved you shall have it all. It is, I think, in point of interest of story, the best of my efforts, and I hope will meet its share of public favour. I like the 4th canto myself, and hope your Ladyship will like it for my sake.

We have been in a terrible state for this fortnight past

—three of my children at once ill of a dangerous and inflammatory fever, brought on by the inauspicious weather with which we have been visited this spring. . . .

I must have expressed myself very ill to lead your Ladyship to think I had any complaint to make of Lord Melville. He has always been my kind, generous, and ready friend, nor doubt I in the least that I shall always find him so, as I have never remarked abatement in his kindness, and I am sure have never done anything to deserve it. I think while they were making so many alterations in the court here, they might have invalided my senior and cash-drawer. The Chief Baron, Lord Melville's nephew, as well as the late President, and several others of our Scotch Commission were desirous that it should have been done. By granting a man of seventy-five a pension for having discharged an important trust for forty years, they would have been guilty of no public robbery, and I, who actually discharge the duty, would have been admitted at least to some recompence for my labour. . . . So much for grumbling. But I am much more angry with our friends for their internal disunion, than for neglecting such an individual as myself. If the present, or any *un-whiggish* administration, will but keep their ground, I will make hay before the light or sunshine of my little reputation sets, and I have always my official emoluments to look to one day, for the deuce is in it if a man twice my age outlive me after all. But I detest the Whigs with a cordial detestation, and the bilious fits which I should experience under their domination, would I am convinced get the better of me.

Now here comes a great request. Your friend Lady Castlereagh has I am told a numerous collection of original letters of Swift, written to her ancestress Mrs. Howard, the favourite of Queen Caroline. Now this may not be true, but it bears a very probable face. I am informed Lord Leitrim has seen them; there are letters (it

is said) to Queen Caroline (I presume while Princess of Wales), to Mrs. Howard, and to Pope. Now, do you think Lady Castlereagh's countenance will so much belie the good-nature which, with beauty, is its distinguishing characteristic, as to refuse me copies of these letters? I will take such care of them as has never been taken of anything in this world, and you need not tell Lady C. that I am an old friend of Canning, since I am sure I am a sincere well-wisher to Lord Castlereagh, whose conduct since that unfortunate quarrel[1] has been so manly, generous, and patriotic. Do, dear Lady, write and let me know what I can expect about these same letters,—not that there is any hurry, only that I am impatient to know if the whole be not one grand blunder or quiz. I fear there is now no chance of my being soon in England, and indeed in the present state of my family it is altogether undesirable. . . . —Believe me, my dear Lady Abercorn, your Ladyship's truly obliged and faithful, WALTER SCOTT.

TO ROBERT SURTEES.[2]

EDINR., 23 *March* 1810.

. . . THE story of the Lambton worm is not unlike that of the Laidley worm of Spindlestonhaugh, or rather that of the serpent slain by our first Scottish Somerville, who made him bolt a burning peat.

I cannot help thinking there is some strange truth disguised under all this fiction. Who knows to what size the reptile race may have attained when the borders, still so very wild, were comparatively uninhabited, covered with wood, and abounding with those animals on which creatures of prey subsisted? As their enemy man increased

[1] Resulting in the well-known duel on September 21, 1809.

[2] From MS. transcript at Abbotsford.

in numbers, the game disappeared before him, and they were at once straitened in provisions and became the object of active and skilful hostility,—underwent in short a sort of blockade and storm at the same time.

Many animals have disappeared from the earth, and many from the island,—the wolf, the wild bull or bison, the elk; and as to the Lowlands, the red deer are of that last number, to which may be added the Capercaillie, or cock of the wood, in the air, and the Beaver in the lake.

If I could for a moment credit the universal tradition respecting almost every Scottish loch, highland or lowland, I would say positively that their water-cow always supposed to dwell there was the hippopotamus, nor should I be at all surprised considering the uniformity of the tradition, both as to the nature and appearance of the animal, if upon draining some of those lochs which the rage for improvement will one day bring about, we should pop upon a skeleton of this Egyptian Behemoth.[2]

Holding this belief I must be particularly gratified in contributing to aid the descendant of a *preux chevalier* who rid the world of one example of a creature rather more curious as a specimen than pleasant as a neighbour. . . .

[1] The Capercailzie has been reintroduced with success, but efforts to naturalise the Beaver, in the changed condition of the country, have hitherto failed.

[2] Scott's ingenious conjecture has not been confirmed by scientific investigation. Professor James Geikie, in reply to an inquiry regarding "Behemoth" in Scotland, writes on March 13th, 1893: —"Yes, the hippopotamus has been found again and again both in caves and river gravels in England: and there is no doubt that it was contemporaneous in our island with Palæolithic man. No trace of it has been met with in Scotland however. I can't believe that the 'water-cow' of tradition was the Behemoth of Palæolithic man, for both hippopotamus and Palæolithic man vanished from Britain before the advent of the last glacial epoch; and it is in the highest degree improbable that any tradition of the kind referred to could have survived down to the period of which Scott speaks."

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

March 30, 1810.

My dear Miss Baillie,—Believe me I have never been so much pleased as with your kind and unmerited goodness in the matter of the *Family Legend*.[1] There is a freemasonry among kindred spirits (and I am your adopted brother) that always leads them to understand one another at little expense of words. I shall hold myself highly honoured indeed in what will, I am certain, make me live long after I should be otherwise forgotten, for no one can both eat his cake and have his cake, and I have enjoyed too extensive popularity in this generation to be entitled to draw long dated bills upon the applause of the next. In the course of a train of life so fortunate as may make a prudent person fearful of the future, I have met with nothing that has given me so much real pleasure, and I verily hope, to use your own phrase, that what I feel is not real vanity but something better.

The play is now groaning in the press; I read the proofs, but this will not ensure their being altogether correct, for in despite of great practice, Ballantyne insists, I have a bad eye. I will gain one advantage by this, that I will obtain possession of the original manuscript, which I will preserve among my other literary valuables.

Your introduction is delightful, flattering to us as Scotsmen and doubly pleasing to us as friends. Erskine is two inches higher upon the kind mention made of him. I have, I understand, missed the very finest performance ever seen in Edinburgh,—Mrs. Siddons (the elder) in Jane de Monfort. Everybody agrees that she was never more herself than in that character; playing with her son, and upon his theatre was doubtless one great cause, not only of

[1] Scott alludes here to the dedication of the *Family Legend* which ran thus:—"To Walter Scott, Esq., whose friendly zeal encouraged me to offer it to the notice of my indulgent countrymen, I inscribe this play."

exertion, but of real enthusiam. She fairly cried herself sick at her own part, so you may believe there was fine work in the front, as they call the audience part of the house: never was there such a night for those industrious females the laundresses. And how came you to be absent, Mr. Scott? Why truly I was dreeing penance for some undiscovered sin at a family party of about a month's invitation, so flight was as much out of the question as it was to suppress my disappointment with patience, for I expected enough, although my expectations appear to have fallen short of the truth.

The young Siddonians are delighted with the distinguished and flattering applause you have given to their efforts.

I wish I was like you in everything; but politics in this free country make an early part of our education, and become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. There is no difference except in words and personal predilections between the candid and well-informed of both parties. In principle there is, and can be, none. No Whig will allow that it is his intention to break down the royal part of the constitution, and no Pittite will call himself an enemy to legitimate freedom. The debateable ground between the parties is very narrow indeed, so far as real principle is concerned. But it is in words and in partialities that we differ, and while we continue mortal, words and partialities will be principal motives to human action; so we will e'en leave the parties to pull caps themselves, and hope that if we do happen to be weights in the one scale or other, at least we are not leaden ones.

Did I not tell you my own poem has nothing to do with the valiant Sir Lancelot? It is a Highland tale, of which the scene is laid on the verge of Loch Katrine. I am pressing the printers to despatch, and hope soon to send you a copy.

I will take care that the bookseller's cash is forthcoming as soon as our bargain permits. You can put it in your scrutoir and dispose it as you please.[1] As for the prologue and epilogue, I believe it is the rule of stage not to resume them after the first *run* of the play is over; that is, so soon as the performance of another piece has intervened. But do not hope you will escape them in the printed copy. If I were as tedious[2] as an emperor, I could find it in my heart to bestow it all on your Ladyship, and I am too fond of sounding my trumpet before you to be ashamed of its being a little out of tune.

You are quite right as to my private opinion of Westall's illustrations; they are badly devised, like almost everything of the kind I ever saw; but what would it have availed to have said so to the artist or to poor Longman?—the deed was done.[3]

By the way, I understand there are two rival sets of illustrations in preparation for the *Lady of the Lake* even before she makes her appearance. Both will probably be execrable; for if Westall, who is really a man of talent, failed in figures of chivalry when he had so many paintings to guide him, what in the devil's name will be made of Highland figures? I expect to see my chieftain, Sir Roderick Dhu (for whom let me bespeak your favour) in the guise of a recruiting serjeant of the Black Watch, and his bard the very model of Auld Robin Gray upon a japanned tea-tray. Mrs. Scott joins in kindest and best love to Miss A. Baillie, Dr. and Mrs. Baillie, and family.—I am ever your truly obliged and faithful

W. Scott.

[1] It is recorded that from 1800, when Kemble brought out "De Monfort" on the London stage, Miss Baillie appropriated one-half her gains to charity.

[2] "If I were as tedious as a King."—*Much Ado about Nothing*, Act iii. Sc. 5.

[3] The illustrations were for a quarto edition of the *Lay*, published in 1808.

TO THE SAME.

EDINBURGH, *May* 7, 1810.

. . . I HAVE no prospect *now* of being in London; but the next time I come, I am much tempted by your kind offer of a harbour for Sophia to bring her with me; she is a clever and tractable child, very capable of improving by what she sees and hears, and I would think a week or two of your society a most important advantage indeed. Early travelling in some respects is an advantage; it opens the ideas of children, and if their companions will have patience to answer their questions, it is perhaps the highest enjoyment you can give them. To quit the actual nursery and come to our literary offspring, you must know that my young babe is born in the shape of a comely 4to. Two or three days since I addressed a copy for you to be left at Dr. Baillie's. . . . I shall be impatient to hear if it has given you any amusement, and if it has been so fortunate, a fico for the critics. This accompanies a copy of the *Family Legend*, which I learn with surprise has not been forwarded to you: it is positively more delightful in reading than in representation. Lord Meadowbank[1] came in here yesterday with his eyes streaming from the perusal; and fetching tears from an old metaphysical lawyer, and Scotchman besides, is something like the miracle of Moses' rod in the wilderness. The sale has been very much to the bookseller's satisfaction; four-fifths of the quantity retained in Scotland are already sold, and the rest daily going off.

James Grahame[2] has returned to Scotland: his wife is

[1] Allan Maconochie, a judge of the Court of Session from 1796. This learned lawyer was one of Scott's earliest recruits for the *Quarterly*. He contributed an article to the fourth number (Nov. 1809) on Charles James Fox, of which Gifford and Canning thought highly. Lord Meadowbank died in 1816.

[2] James Grahame had left the Scotch Bar and taken Orders in the Church of England, where, notwithstanding his talent and literary attainments, he could only obtain a humble curacy in Gloucestershire.

He was a candidate at this time for the incumbency of St. George's Chapel in Edinburgh; but he did not meet the approval of the patrons. He died in 1811.

now in town making interest to get him appointed preacher to the chapel in Queen Street, and I am moving heaven and earth to help her; but I fear she has been too late of starting, as I find many of the most sweet voices are already engaged in behalf of others. He is a worthy, modest, and most ingenious man, ill calculated I fear to beat up against wind and tide, which on this occasion seem to set in against him; but still I do not renounce hope of success. I have not heard why he left the living in England, but suppose he did not quite find the climate agree with him. . . .—I ever am, most faithfully yours,

W. Scott.

TO THOMAS SCOTT.

13*th May* 1810.

. . . I am truly sorry for the reduction of the Militia,[1] yet it is but an idle man's employment, and though the immediate loss be severe, I would fain hope you may, with your talents, find a more lucrative and active sphere of exertion. I have not been quite idle myself, for my situation makes it necessary that I should labour. My last effort has been a new poem, of which I expect to have a copy for you in a week or two. . . .

There is no news here worth telling. Your old friend Bailie Coulter died in his glorious year of Provostry, and was buried as doubtless he would have wished to be, only that Messrs. Young and Trotter, his opponents in the Council, were intrusted with the charge of solemnising his rites of sepulture.

Matters look serious in London, and I fear infinite pains has been taken to infect the Foot Guards with democratic principles. I hope they will have the prudence to send them in an army to Portugal, and replace them with regular marching regiments, less subject from their

[1] Thomas Scott left the Isle of Man in 1810, and in 1811 was appointed Paymaster to the 70th Regiment, then stationed in Scotland. In 1813 it was ordered to Canada, where he joined it.

constitution and discipline to popular contagion. I wish they may have no occasion to regret disbanding Militia and Volunteers. Yet the sense of the generality of the people is so sound that I cannot bring myself to have serious apprehensions. We are beginning to kindle here in a little degree. All reminds me of an exclamation of the French as recorded in their old history, "Tanneguy du Châtel, où es-tu?"[1] What is become of William Pitt? It is astonishing how the loss of one man has deranged the wisdom and disorganised the force of this mighty people. You and I, with wives and children, and seventeen years added to our lives, will hardly scramble so well as we might have done in 1793-4 when the same game was playing.

I was much obliged to you for your curious notices about the remnant of old customs in the Isle of Man. I am surprised their song of triumph over the wren is in English. I remember to have heard verses of it, and if I mistake not, the whole is in Johnson's collection[2] of Scotch songs and music. Burns, who assisted Johnson, may have picked it up in Dumfriesshire. As your residence in so curious a place must have furnished you with many miscellaneous remarks, I wish you would throw them into the shape of a little Essay and send it to me for the *Register*, of which I am a proprietor. . . .—I ever am, yours affectionately,

W. S.

[1] Tanneguy du Chastel. — See *Moreri* for an account of this 15th century Breton Marshal of France, whose example Scott was so fond of citing.

[2] I do not find this custom mentioned in Johnson's Museum; but after the lapse of a dozen years Scott himself alludes to it, and quotes from Waldron a description of the ceremony:—

"On the 24th of December, towards evening, all the servants in general have a holiday; they go not to bed all night, but ramble about till the bell rings in all the churches, which is at twelve o'clock; prayers being over, they go to hunt the wren, and, after having found one of these poor birds, they kill her, and lay her on a bier with the utmost solemnity, bringing her to the parish church, and burying her with a whimsical kind of solemnity, singing dirges over her in the Manx language, which they call her knell; after which Christmas begins."—See *Peveril of the Peak*.

TO MORRITT.

June 1810.

My dear Morritt,—I need not say how acceptable your approbation of the *Lady of the Lake* is to me, because you will readily give me credit for feeling both as a friend and as a poet upon the occasion.

Your criticism is quite just as to the Son of the dry bone, Brian.[1] Truth is, I had intended the battle should have been more detailed, and that some of the persons mentioned in the third Canto, and Brian in particular, should have been commemorated. I intended he should have been shot like a *corbie on a craig* as he was excommunicating and anathematizing the Saxons from some of the predominant peaks in the Trosachs. But I found the battle in itself too much misplaced to admit of being prolonged by any details which could be spared. For it was in the first place *episodical*, and then all the principal characters had been disposed of before it came on, and were absent at the time of action, and nothing hinged upon the issue of consequence to the fable. So I e'en left it to the judgment of my reader whether Brian was worried in the Trosachs, or escaped to take earth in his old retreat in Benharrow, near Ardkinlas.

My principal reason for writing immediately is to beg you will have the goodness to address your pamphlet[2] to me under cover to Mr. Freeling, General Post Office, who gives me the privilege of his unlimited frank in favour of literature. Any moderate packet will always reach me in

[1] Morritt had written: "The only disappointment I felt in the poem is your own fault. The character and terrific birth of Brian is so highly wrought that I expected him to appear again in the *dénouement*, and wanted to hear something more of him; but as we do not hear of his death, it is your own fault for introducing us to an acquaintance of so much promise and not telling us how he was afterwards disposed of."

[2] An anonymous pamphlet by Morritt on the State of Parties, entitled *Advice to the Whigs, etc., by an Englishman.*

that way. I have a little commission for you, if you will be kind enough to accept of it. You know I fell in love with your library table, and now that the *Lady* has put crowns into my purse, I would willingly treat myself unto the like, only I think I have not much occasion for the space which holds accompt books. In other respects it is quite a model, and in that respect I don't quarrel with it; for why should I not be a rich man one day and have accompt books. Now were I to send to your upholsterer (not to mention I have forgot his local habitation and his name) he would probably send me what he best pleased, and therefore I intrude so far on your time as to request you when you are taking a walk to order me such a table as yours, the terms to be ready money on the things arriving here. I should like it to come before I leave town for Ashestiel, which will be 12 July.

I sometimes have thought of a jaunt to the Hebrides this summer. But if this Highland trip should misgive, I would not have you be too secure from an invasion at Rokeby, for I have been persuading myself that the Carlisle stage would set me down at Greta Bridge in no time at all, and I sleep most delectably in a mail-coach. But all this is at present as much a dream as honest John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

So your London citizens are taking the alarm. As Dryden says—

> I would it should be so—'tis a good horror,
> First let them fear for rapes and plundered houses,
> Cold burghers must be struck and struck like flints
> Ere their hid fire will sparkle.

It is disgraceful to see the legislature of this mighty kingdom, representatives of all the power, wisdom, and property of Great Britain, insulted by the very scum of the earth, for such must the mob of Westminster be, and very little better do I hold the factious demagogues of the Livery. . . .

Mrs. Scott joins in kind compliments to Mrs. Morritt.

I fear she will be now longing excessively for the groves of Rokeby.—Ever yours, W. Scott.

Pray don't be lazy, but finish your ballad, with a wanion to you.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

[Edinburgh, *June* 10, 1810.]

I am truly gratified by your approbation of the *Lady of the Lake*. . . . As I am quite sensible of the necessity of giving the public some variety of manner as well as of story, I stretched my canvas on a much smaller scale than when I attempted the story of Flodden. Should I ever write again, which is very uncertain, I intend to take the Hebridean character and scenery with that of the north of Ireland for my subject; but this is truly speaking of the saddling of a foal.

I have forwarded your letter to Grahame, and have done all the little in my power to assist him in his object. The only good I can do is to endeavour to remove political prejudices founded on his poem of Copenhagen, and being myself "more an ancient Roman than a Dane," I have, I think, some chance of being listened to upon such a subject. What probability of success he has is at present uncertain; the vestry in whom the election lies are like other solemn bodies, mysterious and oracular, and the individuals who compose that august Sanhedrim, when spoke to separately say 'hum,' 'go to,' look wise, and make the most of their temporary importance, but we will keep a sharp look out, and do the best we can for the "Sabbath" Bard, who is really a most worthy and amiable man and an excellent painter of Scottish manners and scenery.

The adventure of the Duke of Cumberland is indeed terrible. It looks as if all the curses of the poor Highlanders upon the head of his predecessor in title had been suspended in effect, and had now fallen upon the inoffen-

sive wearer of his unlucky coronet. Is it not very odd that old Duke William, after all the "Tears of Scotland," should have died quietly in his bed, and that this man who is one of the most worthy of his family (I believe) should be hack'd to pieces by an Italian valet[1] for no reason at all? By the way, I have used the incident in conversation as a confutation to those who deny that the excess of hatred in De Monfort's character is founded in nature.

Seillis appears, though in low life, to have been a remarkable person, and I dare say was quite right in his quarrels with Neale, but finding his complaints neglected, and that none of the friends to whom he mention'd them sympathized with his feelings, he brooded over them till he became capable of this desperate action. A passion which we dare not impart to others, and which when imparted attracts no sympathy, is sure in minds of a certain class to burn with a flame more ardent because smother'd; but to talk to you of passions is really sending, as we say, salt to Dysart. . . .

Charlotte would have written to tell you all this, but she feels, or rather thinks she feels, difficulty in expressing herself upon paper so accurately as she would; she sometimes takes fits of apprehension of this kind, though she understands English like a native.

I enclose for Mrs. Hunter[2] a copy of the little metrical *Miscellany*, which has long lain at the bottom of my portmanteau when pack'd for London. I assure you I value her applause not a little, for my sense of it is proportioned to my estimation of her acknowledged talents.

I fancy Dr. Baillie and you Northern folks, banished to

[1] For an account of this singular affair, see *Edinburgh Register*, vol. iii. part 2, pp. 78-85.

[2] Mrs. Hunter, Joanna Baillie's aunt, was Anne Home, widow of John Hunter, the great anatomist, and author of one of the versions of the *Flowers of the Forest*. She was born in 1742, and died in 1821. There are several of her poems in the early volumes of Scott's *Annual Register*.

the lands where "Meadows flower, and corn-fields wave in the Sun," like my poetical bouquet the better that it is chiefly composed of Highland heather.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

29th June 1810.

My dear Lady Abercorn,—I was agreeably disappointed by your kind letter, in which you take upon you a fault which was really mine, for I ought to have apprized you that the Lady of the Lake was waiting to pay her respects to your Ladyship and the Marquis as you passed through Dumfries. I am truly glad the Marquis thinks it worth his patronage, as I certainly most sincerely wished it might not disgrace his Lordship's acknowledged taste, and the kind and friendly dispositions with proofs of which he has honoured me upon so very many occasions. I like it myself as well as any of my former attempts, and the public seem to receive it with kindness, which even the sanguine hopes of the Booksellers had not anticipated. The quarto edition of 2000 has not lasted a fortnight, and the smaller edition is now published, of which I hope to send your Ladyship a copy to-morrow or next day, as it contains a few corrections made since the 1st edition.

As for my lover, I find with deep regret, that however interesting lovers are to each other, it is no easy matter to render them generally interesting. There was however another reason for keeping Malcolm Graeme's character a little *under* as the painters say, for it must otherwise have interfered with that of the king, which I was more anxious to bring forward in splendour, or something like it.

As the Session of our Courts will soon be over I intend to go for a fortnight to the Hebrides, which I have never

visited, though I have been on the opposite mainland. I hardly know whether to expect much or not, but I strongly suspect the best parts of Highland scenery are those which lie upon the main. But my friend Ronald Macdonald of Staffa[1] promises me a good barge, six rowers, a piper, and his own company for pilot, which is a strong temptation. Had your Ladyship remained in Ireland, and been adventurously disposed, you might have sailed from the Irish coast, and in five hours, or not much more, visited the famous cavern of Fingal. I will let you know on my return whether it be worth seeing or no.

I am truly happy Lord Hamilton's health is likely to be re-established, and that his Lady meets your maternal hopes. I hear high accounts of her from every quarter, and I am sure he deserves domestic happiness, which her temper and dispositions are I understand likely to secure to him.[2]

I am grieved about Lady Castlereagh's letters, which would have been of great consequence to me, but I hope her Ladyship will publish them according to her present intention, and I will be happy to have an opportunity of seeing them.

We expect Lord Melville here immediately, and I think I may have some chance of finding him at Dunira on my return from the West Highlands.

I suppose Sir Francis Burdett's extravagancies[3] have been of considerable service to ministers, as they must have the necessary effect of compelling everybody to rally about the King and the Government. Pray what is sup-

[1] Ronald Macdonald of Staffa married the heiress of Steuart of Allanton, and succeeded his father-in-law as second Baronet; he died in 1838.—See Scott's *Life*, vol. iii. p. 272.

[2] Granddaughter of the 15th Earl of Morton. After Lord Hamilton's death she became second wife of the fourth Earl of Aberdeen.

[3] Sir Francis Burdett had been committed to the Tower on the Speaker's Warrant, for breach of Privilege in April, and was released on the prorogation of Parliament in June.

posed to be the real motive of Sir Francis's rejecting the civic triumph which his friends had so kindly prepared for him? Was he afraid that his guards and escort might not prove so orderly as to do credit to their general, or did he feel reluctance, like Sir John Falstaff, to "march through Coventry" at the head of his ragged regiment?

Adieu! my dear friend; if I am not drowned in the whirlpool of Corrievrekin, or knocked against the basaltic columns of Staffa, or carried off by some of the spectre Abbots of Iona, or eaten up by the wild Macraws, whose appearance struck Johnson with some apprehensions of the kind, your Ladyship shall hear from me, with some accounts of my wanderings.[1]

I beg to be respectfully remembered to the Marquis (by whose kind letter I was much gratified) to Lord Hamilton and the ladies, and ever am your Ladyship's very faithful and respectful humble servant,

W. Scott.

Excuse a wafer, as I write from the Court, where we are allowed no lighted tapers.

FROM FRANCIS JEFFREY.

Saturday Evening,
11th August [1810].

My dear Scott,—I think it right to let you see these sheets[2] before any one else sees them. I cannot regret having told the truth according to my oath of office; but I should very deeply regret having told it in such a way as to give you any pain. I am now sensible that there were needless asperities in my review of *Marmion*, and

[1] Scott, with his wife, daughter, and several friends, left Edinburgh immediately after the 12th July, proceeding leisurely, "with his own horses," through the Highlands to Oban, where he took boat for the Western Islands, making his headquarters at Ulva as guest of the Laird of Staffa.

[2] Containing Jeffrey's article on the *Lady of the Lake*.

from the hurry in which I have been forced to write, I dare say there may be some here also. I have bungled your poetical characters too, by beginning my sketch on a scale too large for my canvas, and the mere unskilfulness of the execution I fear has given it something the air of caricature. But I think you have generosity enough to construe me rightly in stating all these things, and to believe me when I say that I am sincerely proud both of your genius and of your glory, and that I value your friendship more highly than most either of my literary or political opinions. And now, presuming that this article will break no squares between us, I have two favours to ask; one, that you would, if possible, dine here on *Tuesday*, to meet Alison, Playfair, and two American ladies who are very much your admirers; and the other, that you would dine here again on Thursday with Jack Murray and two friends of Sydney Smith, who are just returned from the Highlands. I am afraid you will think me very unreasonable for one week, but if I don't catch you now, I am afraid I shall see but little of you till November.—Believe me, ever very faithfully yours, F. JEFFREY.

Half-past five both days.

Be so good as return the sheets when you have quite done with them.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ASHESTIEL, BY SELKIRK, 30*th September* 1810.

I HAVE not, my dear friend, had much to say since I returned from my Highland excursion. The isles in many particulars more than answered my expectation. The cavern in the uninhabited island of Staffa in particular is the most wonderful place of the kind that imagination can conceive. The sides are composed of basaltic columns exactly like those of the Giant's Causeway in Ireland, with

which you are doubtless well acquainted. The angles of those pillars are, as it were, cemented to each other by a sort of yellow concretion resembling spar, or marble, which forms a striking and curious contrast to the sable colour of the granite columns themselves. The arch is as high as that of a cathedral, and has nearly the same regularity of shape, the ribbed pillars bending towards each other, as if to meet at the top. They have, however, at the roof a sort of ceiling formed of the ends of other pillars which have been broken off in the course of the natural convulsion by which the cavern was formed. This immense and magnificent cavern opens full upon the Atlantic Ocean, whose billows roll up to the extremity of the cave with a noise which, even in the calmest day, would deafen thunder. When the weather is extremely calm you can enter the cavern in a boat, but the least swell makes the attempt very dangerous. You can also reach the extremity by scrambling along a line of broken pillars of unequal height, which extends along the right-hand side of the cave. We did both.

The proprietor of the isle, Macdonald of Staffa, a fine high-spirited young chieftain, was our pilot and guide through the Hebrides. He is much loved by his people, whose prosperity he studies very much. I wish I could say so of the Duke of Argyle;[1] but his isles are in a wretched state. That of Iona in particular, where it is said Christianity was first planted in Scotland, and which still exhibits many curious and even splendid remains of monastic grandeur, is now in a most deplorable condition. The inhabitants are so numerous in proportion to the size of the island, that (although it is a fertile spot, comparing it with the other isles around it) it is barely sufficient to support them in the most wretched state possible in

[1] George William, sixth Duke, who died in 1839. The island, the people, and the ecclesiastical remains have received very different treatment at the hands of the present accomplished holder of the title (1893).

ordinary years; in those of scarcity they must starve, for they have nothing to pay for imported corn. Much of this misery might I apprehend be remedied by a well-regulated encouragement to fishermen, for the sea abounds with fish of every description. But such a system, to prevent peculation and abuse, must be carried on under the countenance of an active, benevolent, and at the same time a resolute landlord. We were surrounded on the beach by boys and girls, almost naked, all begging for charity, and some offering pebbles for sale. My wife bought some, which have been since transformed into a very pretty necklace. In the Isle of Ulva, where the Laird of Staffa has his house, we were treated with something like feudal splendour. His people received us under arms, and with a discharge of musketry and artillery. His piper was a constant attendant on our parties, and wakened us in the morning with his music.

The people are a wild and hardy race, very fond of music and poetry, which they chant perpetually to their oars. While we were at Staffa, one of the boatmen who could not speak a word of English came forward and made me a speech, in which there was a great deal of compliment on account of my being "the great bard of the Lowland border," and "burnishing the shields of ancient chieftains," with much more figurative eulogy, of which I regretted I could not get an accurate translation. It concluded with acquainting me with their determination to have a remarkable pillar of the cavern called after me, 'Clachan an Bhaird Sassenach mohr,' or the stone of the great Lowland bard. The ceremony was concluded by a solemn dram of whiskey by way of libation. So you see, my dear Lady Abercorn, that poetry retains its honours even where it is not understood. Perhaps it is owing to the same indulgence that your *protégée*, the *Lady of the Lake*, has met with even more popular favour than any of her predeces-

sors. When the edition now in the press has issued forth, it will make the number amount to seventeen thousand,—a success I believe unexampled in bookselling, when the work was not of a political nature.

I hear the Priory is greatly enlarged. It is not likely I shall see it soon, a London journey being always attended with a certain expense, and I want to save my money to buy a corner among my native hills and build a cottage *à mon gré*.

I beg my most respectful compliments to the ladies and to the Marquis, not forgetting Lord Hamilton, whose health I hope is confirmed.

Believe me, dear Lady Abercorn, with great respect your much obliged and most respectful humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO MISS SMITH.

ASHESTIEL, *4th October* 1810.

LEST I should relapse, my dear Miss Smith, into my unfriendly and ungracious silence, I hasten to express the remorse I have experienced at your kind letter, which I have so little deserved. But the truth is, and I wish I had a better apology, that the spirit of procrastination sometimes quite overcomes me, till an answer so long delayed has neither grace nor good manners, and I am finally terrified from setting about it at all. I might indeed sometimes plead—and with truth—the weariness of fingers whose daily bread depends in some degree on their daily exercise; but I should be ashamed to state to you such an apology in a stronger light than the fact admits of, for the truth is that there are weeks and months in which I do not only not use pen and ink, but have a sort of horror of the very sight of them. This is more especially the case in this retreat which we are just about

to leave for the winter, after having enjoyed an uninterrupted tract of the most delightful and settled good weather which our northern and unstable climate has ever afforded us in my remembrance. I hope you have enjoyed the same in the beautiful scenery where you have been conversant, and that as your climate was more genial, it has been equally uniform and serene.

Mrs. Scott and I employed the early part of the vacation in a tour to the Hebrides, which I had never visited, although I was in early youth acquainted with the mainland opposite to them. My eldest little girl accompanied us, and being quite a little doll whom we could fling to sleep in any corner, she was no inconvenience to us, while I hope she acquired some degree of taste for the beauties of nature which, as it is one of the most attainable, is also one of the most certain sources of enjoyment which life offers us.

The grandeur of the scenes which the islands afford is a little qualified by the sombre and savage state in which it is expressed. Few or no trees, huge barren hills wrapp'd in endless mist, torn by unceasing cataracts, where the waters bear no more proportion to the excavations and ravines which they tear out of the bosom of the hills, than human passions do to the consequences of their indulgence; such are many of the aspects of nature we viewed. These however do not apply to the Highland mainland, where the lochs are usually clothed with the most beautiful birch wood. Nor are the isles without their charms, although they consist rather, as far as I saw, in the eccentricities, than in the ordinary productions of nature. The caverns of Staffa struck me more than anything I ever looked on in my life, and the ever-changing ocean, with all its endless varieties, affords to those who live on its margin studies sufficient to compensate for the want of the usual clothing of wood and verdure.

I have heard so much of the wonders of Killarney that I hope I shall one day pay them a visit, and believe me, I should be proud to profit by the hope you give me of being made known to Lady Kingston.[1] I am much honoured by the good opinion of the Irish nation, whose praise must be always most valuable to a poet, because they are not only a people of infinite genius, but of a warmth of heart and feeling not perhaps generally appreciated, either by your countrymen or mine. The English gentleman (in a new poem, which we shall supposed dated from Ashestiel) asks something that awakes him during the perusal from an habitual contempt of that which goes on around him; a Scotchman likes and praises the work of a countryman, for the same reason that in London he would walk half a mile farther to purchase his ounce of snuff where the sign of the Highlander announces a North Briton. But an Irishman's praise is that of feeling, and though a Scotchman must always be a Scotchman, and like his own countrymen better than those of the other allied kingdoms, yet in doing justice to all three he must allow the praise of spirit and sentiment to the Irish.

As I have been long trammel'd with an edition of Swift's works, which I should be anxious to render respectable, I hope to visit Ireland to endeavour to gain additional light on his history. But whether this will happen next year or no depends upon many trifling contingencies. Mrs. Scott joins me in kindest compliments.

TO MORRITT.

3rd Oct. 1810.

My dear Morritt,—I do not long delay answering your kind letter, and assuring you of my sincere sympathy in the distressing events to which you have lately been

[1] Helen, Lady Kingston, a daughter of Lord Mountcashel.

exposed.[1] The beautiful and feeling verses by Dr. Johnson to the memory of his humble friend Levett, and which with me, though a tolerably ardent Scotchman, atone for a thousand of his prejudices, open with a sentiment which every year's acquaintaince with this *Vanitas Vanitatum* presses more fully on our conviction.

> "Condemn'd to Hope's delusive mine,
> As on we toil from day to day,
> By sudden blast or slow decline
> Our social comforts melt away."

I am sure Mrs. Morritt must have deeply felt these repeated strokes of misfortune. . . .

I have little to complain of the *Edinburgh Review*.[2] Jeffrey sent me the sheets with a kind and for him an apologetic letter, saying he was sensible that there was some needless asperity in his review of *Marmion*, etc., and that he had studied, in delivering his sincere opinion to the public, to do it in a way that should not be unnecessarily harsh to me or my friends. And indeed his general tone is much more civil and respectful than is usual for the *Review*, where an author is neither a philosopher nor a Foxite. But after all, and among friends, I think it should puzzle him to make a popular pudding after the receipt which he has given as mine, and I protest to you that I have been (like the poor Lady who studied anatomy) ignorant till this moment how many pretty things went to the making of me. . . .

The weather till these few days has been delightful beyond what the memory of the oldest persons can retain any trace of, and fortunate it was so, for the harvest was so late that under less favourable auspices than this astonishing tract of fair weather, it could never have been put into the Barnyard.

[1] The death of Mrs. Morritt's brother, Mr. James Stanley, and of another dear friend.

[2] See Jeffrey's *Letter*, ante, p. 185.

I have very little prospect indeed of getting to London next year. My Commission is ended, and sooth to say the expenses of a London journey do not suit a poet's purse altogether so well as, God willing, I would desire they did. But we must meet, and Mrs. Morritt and you being the more locomotive persons will I trust take another peep of Scotland, where you have still so much to see, and I will promise if you do to see you safely back into the West Riding. Have you seen the *Edinburgh Register*? If not, do get it; the history is written by Southey, and though with some tinge of opinions which neither you nor I approve, yet there is much eloquence, and a great deal of what everybody must admire. The principles respecting France are particularly excellent; the general tone of political impartiality gives them great weight, and to my knowledge they are beginning to *tell* among those who would have called them *party clamour* through any *medium*.—Believe me ever, yours truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDIN^R^, 15*th October* 1810.

MY DEAR LADY ABERCORN,—I send a packet addressed to Mr. Arbuthnot, containing a copy of the much honoured *Lady* to wait upon her kindest and best patroness. The quartos have long vanished, nor can I even guess what is become of yours, since you did not find it at the Priory, where I desired it might be sent. I add the little collection, which I hope your Ladyship will approve of.

The treatises on the Fiorin[1] are very interesting, and if they are found to be grounded on practical experience,

[1] Dr. Richardson, an enthusiastic Irish agriculturist, was at this time and for some years later (he died in 1820), pressing strongly upon the public the advantages of Fiorin as a grass for moist grounds or "water meadows." But it has not proved successful.

cannot fail to be of the last consequence to Scotland. I observe Dr. Richardson speaks a good deal about the Duke of Buccleuch's water-meadows. With these I am something acquainted. What they may do with Fiorin I know not, but they are not very productive in their present state. The engineer laid the blame on the quality of the water of the Yarrow, which, being a run from a large lake, is remarkably pure and limpid, very fit for poetry, in which it has been often celebrated, but not so well adapted, it would seem, for water-meadows. After abusing it a great deal the fellow closed his charges against it by comparing it to what I suppose he thought the basest liquor in the world. "It has no more heart," quoth he, swearing to his assertion, "than as much *small-beer*." A very odd simile for the classical Yarrow, thought your minstrel. I daresay the Duke will try the Fiorin, which, if it succeed, will render his extensive system of irrigation much more valuable than it will ever be otherwise.

I would willingly make you, my kind and partial friend, the promise you request respecting my future literary engagements. But the public, with many other properties of spoiled children, has all their eagerness after novelty, and were I to dedicate my time entirely to poetry they would soon tire of me. I must therefore, I fear, continue to edit a little, till circumstances set me more above the necessity of depending upon my pen for an important part of my income. Whenever the time comes that I can, with due attention to my own family, lay aside my prose-pen, I assure you, my dear friend, I shall do it with great pleasure, for, as the Neapolitan beggar says, "You don't know how lazy I am."

I fear all our farmers would laugh at me were I to attempt the Fiorin; for although they might pay me some deference as a lawyer or a poet, or even for finding a hare or spearing a salmon, I fear my agricultural reputa-

tion stands too low among them to give the experiment fair play. But I have an excellent, cool-headed, practical farmer for my neighbour, whom I will put upon the experiment. . . .

I am quite idle just now as to poetry, and have no idea of writing anything serious in that way for a year or two at least. But whether I keep my resolution or not is uncertain, for the *Lady of the Lake* was a very sudden thought, and begun only twelve months ago. I will let you, my dear Lady Marchioness, know so soon as I engage in anything likely to interest you. . . .

TO THE SAME.

EDINBURGH, 24*th October* 1810.

IT would be very difficult for me to express how much I am indebted to your Ladyship for your kind interference in my behalf with the possessors of the precious letters of Dryden, which is the more flattering as Malone was refused access to them when he undertook his *Life of Dryden*. I will be extremely happy to have the honour of being introduced to Lord Malmesbury, and by his means to Lord Whitworth, and I hope to be in town in spring to avail myself of their liberal and kind permission to copy these letters, as well as to return my personal thanks to my kind intercessor.

I wish from my heart I could transport myself to the Priory just now, for I am here on some official duty without a soul to speak to, having left my whole family at my farm. The common phrase of *Nobody in town* is metaphorical with the Great in London, and only means there is nobody one knows; but here it is almost literal at this season—the grass grows in the streets, and you would absolutely think that the place had been visited by the plague. The few natives that are left are run mad with

politics, and bite and scratch each other's eyes out. To complete the whole, I went yesterday to visit a person who has just taken possession of a little old pigeon-house kind of a castle near this town, and entertains his guests according to the ancient Caledonian fashion, with the martial music of the great war-bagpipe played by a Highlander in complete array, who strutted up and down the little hall in which we dined, during the whole time of dinner; so that if there were a single being left to speak one sentence of common sense, I had not an ear left to listen to him, my whole head being yet ringing with the tremendous music of yesterday.

I will now proceed to copy some of the Ballads, lest my packet be too weighty for the cover. The first refers to the Massacre of the Monks of Bangor, who about 610 marched in procession to Chester, then besieged by the heathen king of Northumberland, and were cut to pieces by his soldiers.[1] . . . I have other four little tales, or sing-song kind of verses, to add to this dismal ditty, but I will not copy them at present, because I should disappoint my little wife, who insists that notwithstanding the munificence of Lady Abercorn in equipping me with eternal pens, I am not the most legible writer in the world, and she therefore claims the task of being clerk upon this occasion, were it only to show, though in so trifling a matter, how much she is, as well as I, ever your Ladyship's most respectful and most faithful servant, W. S.

TO MISS SMITH.

Edinburgh, 10*th December* 1810.

I hasten, my dear Miss Smith, to reply to your inquiries about the *Lady of the Lake* in its dramatised form. That Mr. Siddons is bringing it out is very certain, but it

[1] See *Poetical Works*, vol. xi. p. 342.

is equally so that I have not seen and do not intend to see a line of it, because I would not willingly have the public of this place suppose that I was in any degree responsible for the success of the piece; it would be like submitting to be twice tried for the same offence. My utmost knowledge has been derived from chatting with Mrs. Siddons and Mrs. Young in the green-room, where I have been an occasional lounger since our company has been put on a respectable footing. They have got some clever scenery, from studies taken at Loch Katrine by Williams, their painter, who is a very good artist and went there on purpose. But whether the dialogue is in verse or prose I really do not know. There is a *third Lady of the Lake* on the *tapis* at Covent Garden, dramatised by no less genius than the united firm of Reynolds and Morton,[1] But though I have these theatrical grand-children as I may call them, I have seen none of them. I shall go to the Edinburgh piece when it is rehearsed with lights and scenes, and if I see anything that I think worth your adopting I will write to you. The strength will probably lie in the dumb-show, music, and decorations, for I have no idea that the language can be rendered very dramatic. If any person can make aught of it, I am sure you will. The mad Lowland captive if well played should I think answer. I wish I could give you an idea of the original, whom I really saw in the Pass of Glencoe many years ago. It is one of the wildest and most tremendous passes in the Highlands, winding through huge masses of rock without a pile of verdure, and between mountains that seem rent asunder by an earthquake. This poor woman had placed herself in the wildest attitude imaginable, upon the very top of one of these huge fragments; she had scarce

[1] *The Knight of Snowdon*, a musical drama in three acts. The other version referred to was the *Lady of the Lake*, a drama in three acts, by E. J. Eyre.

any covering but a tattered plaid, which left her arms, legs, and neck bare to the weather. Her long shaggy black hair was streaming backwards in the wind, and exposed a face rather wild and wasted than ugly, and bearing a very peculiar expression of frenzy. She had a handful of eagles' feathers in her hand. As she spoke no English, I no Gaelic, we could have no communication, but I learned at the next resting-place that she used to wander among the rocks for whole weeks during the summer, and was only driven back to society by the inclemency of the weather; of her story, which might be sad enough, I could learn nothing. The lady who plays this part should beware of singing with too stiff regularity; even her music or rather her style of singing it, should be a little mad.

Joanna Baillie (for who ever heard of *Miss* Sappho) wrote to me that some of her friends had seen the Surrey piece and censured severely the following circumstance: the King led Ellen the whole length of the stage and took his place upon a throne at the bottom in the discovery scene. This she said was discourteous, and therefore out of character. If you think so too, it can be easily corrected.

I wish I could direct you about the plaid; but you had better take the prettiest according to your own taste, for the Douglases being a Lowland family had no particular colour of tartan. I rather wish I could show you how to put it on, for it is a great art, and when done prettily is very becoming. I can only describe it by negatives. It is not like a Highland serjeant's, nor is it *scarf-wise* like a shepherdess in an opera; but as I have no opportunity of "rowing you in your plaidie" I should only puzzle you by an attempt to describe it. The plaid is fastened by a brooch, which should be large and showy. The chaussure should be buskins of deer-skin; this applies to the Highland men also. Douglas, the King, and other personages should be dressed in the old English fashion, from which

the Scottish dress differed but little. All caps or bonnets, no hats. The bonnet should not be overlaid with feathers, a single plume distinguished the Dunnie-wassell or gentleman, when I first remember the Highlands, from the peasant.[1]

These little trumpery notices are all that occur to me. Doubtless were I with you, I would, in my anxiety that *you* should shine where I am at all concerned, plague you enough about costume. If anything should occur in which I can be useful, pray, my dear Miss Smith, command, and show as much of this letter to Mr. C. as you think can be of use to him. A good Christmas and all kinds of success to you, WALTER SCOTT.

P.S.—I shall be anxious to hear how you succeed.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

22*nd December* 1810.

MY DEAR LADY ABERCORN,—We are dying here for political news, even like shell-fish at the ebb of the tide, and you, my dear friend, who soar above us like an osprey, and see all the changes of the atmosphere at a distance, have not the charity to drop me a single line to make me wiser than my fellows. I am, however, in the happy state of one who has nothing either to hope or fear from the change I apprehend, unless as far as it affects my friends or the country at large.

An administration who may dislike me can fortunately take nothing from me; and my friends who are now in

[1] Scott's love of accuracy in costume was once shown in the green-room, when Kemble was preparing to go on the stage as Macbeth. He took the liberty of divesting the great actor's Highland bonnet of "sundry huge bunches of black feathers which made it look like an undertaker's hearse, and replaced them by a single broad quill feather of an eagle sloping across his noble brow." Kemble told Scott afterwards that the change was worth to him three distinct rounds of applause from the audience.—*Miscell. Works*, vol. iv. p. 205.

power have never seemed much disposed to befriend me effectually. . . .

We have a report here that *our* Marquis is to be Lord Chamberlain, at which I should greatly rejoice if I could hope that there was foundation for it. I am sure they will be much obliged to him if he shall be disposed to take such a troublesome office.

Should this fortunately be the case, I shall have a suit to his Lordship on the score of the Edin^r^ theatre; having been foolish enough to consent to be a trustee for the public, along with my Lord Chief Baron, the Lord Advocate, Solicitor, and some other of our first people here. A dispute has unfortunately arisen about the patent which has involved Messrs. the Trustees, who had no other interest in the matter than the pleasure of serving the public, in great plague and vexation. *If* such an appointment should take place, it would be very kind in you, my dear Lady, to let me know *early*, that I may solicit an audience on this troublesome business, with which, if I had known as much of theatrical matters two years ago as I do now, I would never have troubled myself upon any account.

I am afraid you would scold me if I told you how idle I have been since writing to your Ladyship, and therefore I will keep my secret.

They are busy dramatizing the *Lady of the Lake* here and in Dublin, and in Covent Garden. I carefully avoid making inquiries, lest it should be expected I should give any assistance, and I would not willingly give the public a pretext for supposing that I intended introducing myself on them in another shape. It would be like being twice tried for the same offence, so I content myself with instructing Mrs. Henry Siddons, who is a very pleasant as well as a very amiable person, how she should put on, or as we may say, *busk* her Highland plaid. Her husband, a very worthy and honourable man, but with very little of his

mother's genius, is our manager here, and I fear likely to be hurt with this foolish embroilment of the patent, which makes me more anxious about it than I should otherwise be.

I hope you got your own copy of the *Lady of the Lake* safe. Perhaps, like other ladies, she was so late in paying her respects, that she did not deserve to have her call acknowledged.

We are going to set forward, in the middle of a snowstorm I fear, to keep an old hereditary engagement of eating our turkey and cheese with my friend and chief Mr. Scott of Harden on Xmas Day.

Two days ago we had a dreadful accident on the coast, two frigates lost by bad pilotage. They mistook the light of a lime-kiln for the beacon of the Isle of May, and ran straight ashore. Fortunately almost all the crews were saved.—Yours ever truly and respectfully, W. S.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE

MERTOUN, *December 31st*, 1810.

NOTHING, my dear Miss Baillie, could have given me more pleasure than your setting some value on the trinket which accompanied my last, and not a little proud shall I be of its occupying a place in the new gown. Charlotte puts in for her share of merit, and is not a little delighted that you should have assigned it to her. But when will our mourning be over and our splendour shine forth? Alas! not I fear until we have mourned for our poor old King, whose frame I should fear is gradually giving way under this terrible malady. Yet if his recovery should not be speedy and permanent, I scarce know how to wish it, either for his own sake or that of the country, for the unsettled and feeble domination of a Regency will not fail to have its usual effects in setting the worst principles of faction afloat, and dividing the country between those who

profess to stand up for the father, and those who adhere to the son, and that at a moment when all the united talents of our best politicians, and the continued and unanimous efforts of our whole nation, would not be more than enough to ensure the safety of the commonwealth.

I am truly happy that the prince has behaved with decorum and moderation. Any appearance of pressing forward into power at such a juncture would imply a great unworthiness to possess it.

Even amid these tragic considerations it is impossible to preserve gravity at the frisks and frolics of our northern Mæcenas, Sir John Sinclair, Bart. It is actually like the Punch of the puppet show, who intrudes himself into every scene, grave or tragic, whether it represents King Solomon in all his glory or the Universal Deluge. To show you how essentially necessary this wise-acre thinks it that he should have a finger in every man's pie, he wrote me the other day a long letter, laying down rules for a poem to be called the *Lady of the Sea*, and which was to turn upon the adventures and intrigues of a Caithness mermaiden, with whom he almost promised me an interview. I parried the undertaking by reminding him that he had brought the sea-nymphs so much into the province of natural history that they could no longer be considered as fictitious beings, and had therefore ceased to have any title to poetic commemoration.[1] This wise

[1] The letter of this worthy gentleman has been preserved, and he not only gravely suggests such a subject for a new poem, but gives some curious details of his visit to the Trossachs: "I was fortunate enough," said the Baronet, "to have a very favourable day for visiting the beauties of Loch Catherine, in the fame of which I take a peculiar interest, as it was first brought into notice by the publication of the *Statistical Account of Scotland* [of which Sir John was the originator]. . . . You have increased the number of visitors to Loch Catherine beyond *measure*; my carriage was the 297th in the course of this year, and there had never been above 100 before in any one season when its fame rested solely on prosaic eulogiums; so that the effect of praise in verse compared to praise in prose is as 3 to 1."

epistle reminded me of the tragic plan he was kind enough to lay down for you, and which, hard-hearted as you are, you failed to avail yourself of. And that celebrated project of Darius conducted me to a much more pleasing subject, the *Family Legend*; so before I left town for the holidays I made John Ballantyne furnish me with the enclosed copy of a letter to Mr. Henderson, which is the second, he tells me, he has written to him about the copy money; it will apprise you how that matter stands, and you have only to

> Speak your wishes, speak your will,
> Swift obedience meets them still.

As for the metamorphosis of the *Lady of the Lake* into drama, or rather three dramas, for the same adventure is to be tried at Dublin, London, and Edinburgh, I would not willingly have you believe either that I affect or possess stoicism enough to be insensible to the applause of a crowded theatre; on the contrary, I think that of all kinds of popular plaudits, this is the manner in which an author has his most satisfactory, and perhaps intoxicating, draught of success. But I shall have no more honour, supposing any of these attempts successful, than the cook who roasted a turkey yesterday has for the capo-rota (I think housewives call it so) . . . presented us to-day out of the reliques of the feast.

I cannot think with much patience of such persons as Reynolds and Morton garbling my unfortunate verses and turning that into dramatic dialogue which is but well enough as it stands in minstrel verse; and therefore once more do I wish the whole affair at the bottom of Loch Katrine, nor do I care if they carried the whole race of melo-drama along with them, provided the stage were left open to the tragedies of a certain fair lady who does not know her own merit, or believe what her friends tell her on that point. . . .

Meanwhile I shall wait with anxiety the promised volume. Perhaps I may have a Pisgah sight of it when I come to Hampstead in spring, which in the event of my coming to London, is one of the most pleasant objects I have in view.

If there be anything incoherent in this letter, pray ascribe it to my working in the neighbourhood of a ball, for all the little Scotts of Harden, with the greater part of my own, are dancing in the New Year Eve . . .

CHAPTER VII

1811

EDINBURGH AND ASHESTIEL

"Now on the scene Vimeira should be shown,
On Talavera's fight should Roderick gaze,
And hear Corunna wail her battle won,
And see Busaco's crest with lightning blaze:—
But shall fond fable mix with heroes' praise?
Hath Fiction's stage for Truth's long triumphs room?
And dare her wild-flowers mingle with the bays,
That claim a long eternity to bloom
Around the warrior's crest, and o'er the warrior's tomb!"

Vision of Don Roderick.

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1811—AGE 40.

At work on Swift.

First purchase of land on Tweedside.

Vision of Don Roderick, cr. 4to, published by Ballantyne & Co, *July*.

The Inferno of Altisidora and Imitations, *The Poacher*, *The Resolve*, *Bridal of Triermain*, in progress.

Secret History of the Court of James I., 2 vols. 8vo, published by Longmans, London.

Last Autumn at Ashestiel.

Contribution to *Quarterly*—

Southey's Curse of Kehama, in No. 9, Feb. 1811.

CHAPTER VII.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDIN^R., *11th January* 1811.

I MUST not, my dear Lady Abercorn, allow you to remain under your airy delusions as to my good faith.[1] . . . The first hundred lines of the *Lady of the Lake* were written, I think, in October 1809, and the first canto was sent to your Ladyship in Ireland so soon as it was complete, and you were the first who saw them excepting one friend and the printer, Mr. Ballantyne, who is a great critic as well as an excellent printer. I have been always, God help me, too poor and too impatient to let my poems lie by me for years, or for months either; on the contrary, they have hitherto been always sent to the press before they were a third part finished. This is, to be sure, a very reprehensible practice in many respects, and I hope I shall get the better of it the next time. I assure you *seriously*, my dear friend, that I am *not* about any new poem, and it is needless to add that nobody can have seen that which has no existence.

Whenever I *do* begin any work you shall know it; but I hope we shall meet first. When the idea of a new poem has at any time crossed my imagination, I foresee great difficulty in the choice of a subject. I have sometimes thought of laying the scene during the great civil war in 1643. This would have the advantage of some novelty, and the characters of the period might be rendered

[1] Lady Abercorn had complained that her friend had withheld his confidence regarding the *Lady of the Lake* when in progress.

highly poetical. The only thing I have rhymed since *The Lady of the Lake* is translations from some very old Swiss battle-songs for a work called *Northern Antiquities*, which is undertaken by two friends of mine, who are very learned and very indigent, and to whom therefore I am glad to give a little assistance.

I was quite delighted with Mr. Perceval's speech,[1] and indeed with his conduct through all this most unhappy business. He has risen greatly in the opinion of the country, and, with all who stand by the good old distressed Monarch at this crisis, will have a more noble reward in his own conscience and in the applause of all good men, than any continuation of power could have bestowed. I beg of your friendship, dear Lady A., to let me know when there is any probability of a favourable change in the King's malady; ill news will come soon enough. The Whig interest here are solemnizing their approaching power by giving parties, etc.,—somewhat indecent this.[2]

The Duke of Argyle's marriage was a nine days' wonder, and is already forgotten.[3] I saw Lady Charlotte for an hour one evening as she passed through Edinburgh.[4] She is still looking beautiful. We hear she is or was on the eve of marrying Lord Petersham. Don't you think that might be as well let alone? She has, I should think, left Scotland now, having passed through Edinburgh while I was at Mertoun.

I have sometimes serious thoughts of going to Portugal;

[1] In the debate in Parliament on the Regency Bill, Dec. 1810, rendered necessary by the sudden illness of the old king, which followed the death of his favourite daughter Princess Amelia.

[2] The expected change of administration on the appointment of a Regent did not take place.

[3] George William, sixth Duke, married the daughter of the Earl of Jersey, on Nov. 29, 1810. She had been the wife of the Marquis of Anglesey.

[4] Lady C. Campbell, daughter of the fifth Duke of Argyll, was then Lady-in-waiting to the Princess of Wales. See *Diary of the Times of George IV.*, 2 vols. 8vo, 1838.

that is, if the war lasts and Lord Wellington is to be supported there. I have described so many battles that I would compound for a moderate degree of risque to see one, and I suppose a non-combatant would be in no great danger, and that I could easily get letters to headquarters. But all this is rather a vision than a scheme.

Mr. Knight's[1] idea of a poem is an admirable one. Pray have the goodness to remember me to him, and believe me, with all respectful remembrances to the Marquis and the family, your honoured and obliged, W. S.

TO THE SAME.

February 25th, 1811.

My dear Lady Abercorn,—Two of the enclosed were sent me yesterday, and I take the liberty to beg your acceptance of one of them. It is prettily engraved and not worth refusing. The dog is my poor deceased *Camp*,[2]

[1] Richard Payne Knight, the well-known numismatist who had suggested a subject for Scott's muse.

[2] Readers will recollect the pathetic account of Camp's burial in the Garden behind 39 Castle Street, the whole family standing in tears round the grave, while Scott himself smoothed down the turf with the saddest expression of face his daughter had ever seen. —See *Life*, vol. iii. p. 189.

The following is Sir Walter's letter to Mr. Stevenson, referred to at p. 36 :—

"Camp was got by a black and tan English terrier called Doctor, the property of Mr. Storie, Farrier in Rose Street, about 1800, out of a thorough-bred English brindled bull-bitch, the property of Mr. John Adams of the Riding School, Adjutant to the Royal Edinburgh Volunteer cavalry. He was of great strength and very handsome, extremely sagacious, faithful and affectionate to the human species, and possessed of a great turn for gaiety and drollery. Although he was never taught any tricks, he learned some of his own accord, and understood whatever was said to him as well as any creature I ever saw. His great fault was an excessive ferocity towards his own species, which sometimes brought his Master and himself into dangerous scrapes. He used to accompany me always in coursing, of which he was a great amateur, and was one of the best dogs for finding hares I ever saw, though I have since had very fine terriers. At last he met with an accident which gave him a sprain in the back from which he never recovered, after which he could not follow when I went out on horseback. The servant used to tell him when I was seen coming home. I lived then at

whom your Ladyship has often heard me mention: my friends wrote as many elegies for him in different languages as ever were poured forth by Oxford or Cambridge on the death of a crowned head. I have Latin, French, Italian, Greek, Hebrew, German, Arabic, and Hindostanee poems to his memory. The distant view is that of Hermitage Castle, which the artist had ingenuity enough to draw from a very wretched sketch of mine. There was a Mezzotint print done from the same picture, but far inferior to the enclosed.[1] I hope you will honour it with a corner in your boudoir. . . .

TO MISS SMITH.

EDIN., 12*th March* 1811.

. . . I AM very glad the manager found his advantage in the *Lady of the Lake* which, as far as I can judge,

Ashestiel, and there were two ways by which I might return. If the servant said, 'Camp, your Master is coming back by the hill,' he ran to meet me in that direction. If the lad said, 'by the ford,' he came down to the bank of the river to welcome me; nor did he ever make a mistake in the direction named. I might mention many instances of similar sagacity. He was seldom scolded or punished, and except in his pugnacious propensities, I never saw so manageable a dog. I could even keep him from fighting so long as I had my eye on him, but if I quitted my vigilance for a moment he was sure to worry the dog nearest to him.

"He is painted in two portraits of his owner by Raeburn, one at Dalkeith Palace, and one in my own possession. He lived till about twelve years old, and might have lived longer but for the severe exercises which he had taken when young, and a considerable disposition to voracity, especially where animal food was to be come by. I could add a number of curious anecdotes of his sagacity, but they are connected with a family loss, since sustained, and are painful to recollect or detail. There is enough to illustrate Mr. Stevenson's picture, which was painted by Mr. Howe, then a painter of animals of some merit. W. S.

SHANDWICK PLACE,
EDINBURGH, *March* 11*th*, 1828.

"I may add that the breadth of his chest and broadness of his paws made him a capital water-dog, and when I used to shoot wild ducks—which was not often—an excellent retriever."

[1] The engraving by C. Turner of Raeburn's portrait of Scott, painted in 1808, for Constable.

is very well adapted for the stage; and I am delighted that you were thought a proper representative of Ellen, because that is paying Ellen a very high compliment. Our attempt at the *Lady of the Lake* did not succeed quite so well: yet it answered expectation, I believe, as to profit. The words of the poem are retained; but, as they were thrown into the arrangement of blank verse, the dialogue had, to those acquainted with the poem, the appearance of an old friend with a new face. You always missed the expected, and perhaps the remembered rhyme, which had a bald effect. I think your plan infinitely preferable.

In point of representation Mrs. Young played the mad captive superbly, and threw everybody into tears. Mrs. H. Siddons did not perform Ellen so well as I expected; she had got somehow a little too *Columbinish*, and fell short in the dignity which should mingle even with the playful simplicity of a high-born maiden. But you are not to whisper this to any one, for Mrs. H. Siddons is a very particular friend of mine, and I know it would hurt her were it to come round. They are now going to buy the London edition of this said poem called the *Knight of Snowdoun*, which will probably produce them a house or two. I am told Roderick recovers and marries Ellen, there being no Malcolm Graeme in the case. You must know this Malcolm Graeme was a great plague to me from the beginning. You ladies can hardly comprehend how very stupid lovers are to everybody but mistresses. I gave him that dip in the lake by way of making him do something; but wet or dry I could make nothing of him. His insignificance is the greatest defect among many others in the poem; but the canvas was not broad enough to include him, considering I had to group the King, Roderick, and Douglas. I should have told you that a young man of uncommon talent and accomplishment (Mr. Daniel

Terry[1]) played Roderick Dhu delightfully. He is a rising actor, studies hard, and is a man of extensive reading, fine taste, and amiable manners. He often comes to read Shakespeare to me of an evening. . . .

TO THE SAME.

EDINR., *4th April* 1811.

THAT nothing may be wanting in my power to enable you to represent the Witch Dame of Branksome[2] in proper costume, I lose no time in answering your letter. The lady, when engaged in her magical intercourse with the spirits, should I think have a sort of stole or loose upper scarf with astrological hieroglyphics of the planets. I have seen Prospero wear such a thing, which you may remember he desires Miranda to pluck from his shoulders. For the same reason I would have the hair loose in the first scene, and afterwards put under such a head-dress as Queen Mary is usually represented with. The first scene should be a good deal studied in point of dress and scenery, for I conceive the lady's intercourse with supernatural beings is more to be understood from external appearances than from anything she actually says. I quite approve of your changing dress for the tournament. Only still be so good as remember you are a widow, and must therefore be rather sumptuous than showy in attire. The black velvet with old point will be quite in taste, and so will the relief of the green and gold. If you do not like Queen Mary's coif, you may chuse among the prints to *Birch's Lives*. Pray drub your management for the general blunder of

[1] Daniel Terry had just joined Henry Siddons's Company, and by his many accomplishments soon became a friend of Scott, for whom he had the most unbounded veneration. He afterwards became manager of the Adelphi Theatre in London, but was not successful. He died in 1829.

[2] In *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, dramatised under the title of *Border Feuds*, or the *Lady of Buccleuch*, in three acts.

dressing the Scottish borderers in tartan. He might as well make them speak Gaelic. They should have the bonnet; and in a very picturesque ballad by a living borderer I find a spirited description of the appearance of Wat of Harden as handed down by tradition, from which some hints might be taken. I should say that the poet is lineally descended from the henchman of this famous marauder, a man selected for huge stature and great strength, and called, in allusion to his very unpoetical name of *Hog*, the Wild Boar of Falshope, and that it is from family tradition that this account of his protector's array was handed down—

"And he 's away to Holy Rood,
Among the nobles a',
Wi' bonnet like a girdle broad,
And hair like Craighope snaw.
His coat was o' the forest green,
Wi' buttons like the moon;
His trews were o' the good buck skin,
Wi' all the hair aboon;
His twa hand sword hung round his neck,
And rattled to his heel.
The rowels of his silver spurs
Were of the Rippon steel;
His hose were braced with chains of airn,
And round wi' tassells hung.
At ilka tramp of Harden's heel
The royal arches rung."[1]

If Wat Tinlinn comes on the stage, an excellent sketch of his proper costume may be seen in the frontispiece to the first or second vol. of Grose's *Military Antiquities*, where an English archer is represented in his leathern jacket studded with iron plates. Only Wat Tinlinn should have a pike instead of the ugly mallet in the print.

If I were to write anything for the stage, it would be for the delight of dressing the characters after my own fancy. But I am sure I never shall have that pleasure.

[1] See in Hogg's Mountain Bard the ballad of *Gilmanscleuch*.

The ruinous monopoly of the two theatres necessarily excludes everything but show, and renders the managers absolutely dependent upon that class who have least real taste for the stage as an elegant amusement. Their hours must be studied, their taste must be consulted, and the hours and taste of such an audience being necessarily at variance with those of the more polite and better educated part of society, why truly we may say, with a little alteration of the old song—

> "Our ancient English tragedy is banished out of doors.
> Our lords and ladies run to see signoras and signors."

It increases my good opinion of the Irish nation that they have not fallen into the general depravity of dramatic taste, and that they do justice, my dear Miss Smith, to your merits. I shall be delighted when we can see you once more in the Land of Cakes, as your letter seems to promise. Adieu! and pray let me know how the Lady of Buccleuch is received. Believe me, with sincere regards, your faithful friend and servant, W. SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ASHESTIEL, 30*th April* 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I promised I would not write any poetry without letting you know, and I make all sort of haste to tell you of my sudden determination to write a sort of a rhapsody upon the affairs of the Peninsula. It is to be called the *Vision of Don Roderick* and is founded upon the apparition explanatory of the future events in Spain, said to be seen by the last King of the Gothic race, in a vault beneath the great church of Toledo. I believe your Ladyship will find something of the story in the Comtesse D'Aunois' travels into Spain,[1] but I find it at most length in an old Spanish history of the aforesaid Don

[1] Aulnoy, or Aunoy (Marie-Catherine), *Relation du Voyage d'Espagne*, 1691 et 1699. 3 vols. in -12, Paris.

Roderick, professing to be translated from the Arabic, but being in truth a mere romance of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. It will serve my purpose, however, *tout de même*. The idea of forming a short lyric piece upon this subject has often glided through my mind, but I should never, I fear, have had the grace to turn it to practice if it were not that groping in my pockets to find some guineas for the suffering Portuguese, and detecting very few to spare, I thought I could only have recourse to the apostolic benediction, "Silver and gold have I none, but that which I have I will give unto you." My friends and booksellers, the Ballantynes of Edinburgh, have very liberally promised me a hundred guineas for this trifle, which I intend to send to the fund for relieving the sufferers in Portugal. I have come out to this wilderness to write my poem, and so soon as it is finished I will send you, my dear Lady Marchioness, a copy—not that it will be worth your acceptance, but merely that you may be assured I am doing nothing that I would not you knew of sooner than any one. I intend to write to the Chairman of the Committee by to-morrow's post. I would give them a hundred drops of my blood with the same pleasure, would it do them service, for my heart is a soldier's, and always has been, though my lameness rendered me unfit for the profession, which, old as I am, I would rather follow than any other. But these are waking dreams, in which I seldom indulge even to my kindest friends.

I have not heard anything from Mr. Dundas. His father wrote him a letter, of which he sent me a copy, and which is worth twenty disappointments. It is frank, generous, and if too warmly partial to me, is very honourable to his feelings, admitting his judgment to be blinded by personal regard. I have written to Mr. Dundas in hopes to bring this matter to some end or other. They must give Mr. Home a pension in the event of my resignation,

and really I see no reason why they should economize for the State at the expense of my rising family. By diminishing my establishment, devoting my time to letters, selling my library and my house in town, and retiring to the country for life, I shall be able to make a provision for my young people without dependence on any one. My house is worth £2000, and my library, which has been my most expensive hobby-horse, worth a great deal more, even retaining the more useful books. So that if they choose to prefer any other person to my office, I shall only have to regret having spent five years in doing duty for nothing. I have realized some hundreds a year besides my Sheriffdom, which is £300 more, so that I shall have enough for all the useful, and some of the ornamental, purposes of income, and have the less right to complain of any disappointment.

Adieu, my dear friend, for deuce take this poem, it must be written before it can be read. I beg my kindest respects to your noble friends, and am ever, your truly obliged W. S.

P.S.—When does your Irish journey take place? I must waylay you at Dumfries.

TO A SCHOOLBOY.[1]

ASHESTIEL, *6th May* 1811.

. . . The friends who know me best, and to whose judgment I am myself in the constant habit of trusting, reckon me a very capricious and uncertain judge of

[1] Written to James Dusautoy, a lad of fifteen, who had sent Scott some specimens of his versification. In the Abbotsford collection there are many letters from boys and young men seeking counsel, all of which Scott appears to have replied to, and then folded them carefully, writing name and date on the back of each. None of Scott's replies were accessible to me, and the above letter is quoted from Southey's *Life and Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 20. Mr. Dusautoy was a distinguished student at Cambridge, but died there suddenly of malignant fever about 1814.

poetry; and I have had repeated occasion to observe that I have often failed in anticipating the reception of poetry from the public. Above all, sir, I must warn you against suffering yourself to suppose that the power of enjoying natural beauty and poetical description are necessarily connected with that of producing poetry. The former is really a gift of Heaven, which conduces inestimably to the happiness of those who enjoy it. The second has much more of a knack in it than the pride of poets is always willing to admit; and, at any rate, is only valuable when combined with the first. . . . I would also caution you against an enthusiasm which, while it argues an excellent disposition and feeling heart, requires to be watched and restrained, though not repressed. It is apt, if too much indulged, to engender a fastidious contempt for the ordinary business of the world, and gradually to render us unfit for the exercise of the useful and domestic virtues which depend greatly upon our not exalting our feelings above the temper of well-ordered and well-educated society. No good man can ever be happy when he is unfit for the career of simple and commonplace duty; and I need not add how many melancholy instances there are of extravagance and profligacy being resorted to under pretence of contempt for the common rules of life. Cultivate then, sir, your taste for poetry and the belles-lettres, as an elegant and most interesting amusement; but combine it with studies of a more severe and solid cast, and such as are most intimately connected with your prospects in future life. In the words of Solomon: "My son, get knowledge." . . .

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINR., 17*th May* 1811.

I DO not know anything of a play of mine, my dear friend, unless it be a sort of a half mad German tragedy

which I wrote many years ago, when my taste was very green, and when, like the rest of the world, I was taken in with the bombast of Schiller. I never set the least value upon it, and as I gave copies to one or two people who asked for them, I am not surprised it should have risen up in judgment against me, though its resurrection has been delayed so many years. I happen fortunately to have a clean copy, of which I entreat your acceptance. The story of the Invisible Tribunal, on which it is founded, is probably familiar to your Ladyship. A very good little German romance entitled Hermann of Unna is founded upon it, and was translated about the time I employed myself in this idle task. The only tolerable scene is that between the mother and son, which I think would have a dramatic effect.

I long to know when your motions are fixed. My wife will accompany me to Dumfries, as she is very desirous to have an opportunity, however awkward, to have the honour of thanking you for all your kindness. She is engaged in copying the *Vision of Don Roderick* as fast as I copy it out for press, in order that your Ladyship may be possessed of it so soon as it is finished. It is all in the stanza of Spenser, to which I am very partial. . . .

I am about a grand and interesting scheme at present, —no less than the purchase of a small property delightfully situated on the side of the Tweed, my native river. The worst is, there are few trees, and those all young. I intend to build a beautiful little cottage upon the spot, which will either be my temporary or constant residence, as Mr. Arbuthnot[1] succeeds or fails in his kind exertions on my behalf. I am sure I cannot be sufficiently grateful to him, or the kind friend who interested him in my fortune. I have a letter from Mr. R. Dundas, who pleads his journey to Scotland as a cause of delay, and seems pretty confident of bringing matters to a favourable conclusion. Am I not

[1] Mr. Charles Arbuthnot, one of the Secretaries to the Treasury.

a good philosopher to write verses when I have £1300 a year trembling in the scale? But how could I help myself by being anxious? . . .

TO THE SAME.

EDINR., *25th May* 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—The calamity which has befallen our Courts of Justice, and Scotland in general, by the sudden death of our Lord President,[1] renders it impossible for me to be at Dumfries on the 27th, agreeably to my intention, as we are all thrown into great confusion by so cruel a loss. I have, God knows, my own peculiar share in this general misfortune, for both in my official intercourse and in private life I lived upon the best and most intimate footing with the great judge we have lost. There never was a more general sorrow extending over all classes and parties of men. He was a rare instance of a man who attained universal popularity by the discharge of his duty, although he scorned to court it by any of the usual arts. And I do not believe that high and scrupulous integrity, extent of legal knowledge, and that dignified demeanour so necessary to support the credit of a Court of Justice, ever met so happily in a person of his eminent station. He had not been at the head of our law above two years,—just long enough to show that what we all admired was no extraordinary exertion in consequence of his promotion, but the steady and uniform tenor of his conduct. He was not ill above half-an-hour, and I had parted with him the day before, in great health and spirits, after much laughing at some nonsense or other; but such is our precarious tenure. I forget, my dear friend, that you probably did not know

[1] Robert Blair of Avontoun (son of Rev. Robert Blair, minister of Athelstaneford, author of *The Grave*), admitted advocate 1764, chosen Dean of Faculty 1801, Lord President, 16th Nov. 1808, died May 20, 1811.

this excellent man, but as a dear friend of mine, and an irreparable and unspeakable loss to Scotland, I am sure you will regret our loss of him. . . .

TO MORRITT.

1*st July* 1811.

. . . I AM quite delighted with your account of your journey, and would be most happy if I could promise myself the pleasure of seeing you in Yorkshire this season. But as the French ambassador told the king, wishing to show that he understood the vernacular idiom and familiar term of the English language, "I have got some fish to fry." You must know that my lease of Ashestiel being expired, I have bought a small farm, value about £150 yearly with the intention of "bigging myself a bower," after my own fashion. The situation is good, as it lies along the Tweed about three miles above Melrose, but alas! the plantations are very young. However, I think if I can get an elegant plan for a cottage it will look very well, and furnish me amusement for some time before I get everything laid out to my mind. We stay at Ashestiel this season, but migrate the next to our new settlements.

I have only fixed upon two points respecting my intended cottage, one is, that it shall stand in my garden, or rather kail-yard; the other, that the little drawing-room shall open into a little conservatory, in which conservatory there shall be a fountain. These are articles of taste which I have long determined upon. But I hope before a stone of our paradise is begun we shall meet and collogue about it. I believe I must be obliged to my English friends for a few good acorns, as I intend to sow a bank instead of planting it, and we do not get them good here. I will write to you again very soon, being now busied in bundling off my presentation copies of *Don*

Roderick. Charlotte joins in kindest respects to Mrs. Morritt. Our little folk are all indebted to your kind remembrance, and I am ever yours, W. S.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINBURGH, *5th July* 1811.

MANY thanks, my dearest friend, for your kind remembrance from Dumfries, which I postponed answering from day to day because I expected continually to have had *Don Roderick* before the public. I sent a small private copy, of which I printed a few to give away among particular friends, to Mr. Arbuthnot on Sunday last for your kind acceptance. By to-morrow's post I shall send him one of the large-paper copies, which is better fitted for your weak eyes. I hope sincerely they are getting better, and I beg you will not exert them too much, but get some one to read to you. When very young and a hard student I injured my eyes greatly by reading very late, and writing still later; but I found great advantage from the constant practice, then recommended to me, of washing the throat and particularly the back of the neck repeatedly in the course of the day with the coldest spring water I could get; and my eyes are now tolerably recovered, though I am very cautious of straining them. . . .

We have, indeed, in poor Lord Melville, lost a generous-spirited patriot, a man of the most extensive political information, and one of the kindest friends in private life, that ever adorned society. Lady Melville is still at Dunira, in the Highlands, bearing her incalculable loss as people must bear irremediable afflictions. The fatal disease was an ossification of the veins and fibres of the heart, which had commenced so far back as 1802, attended with violent palpitation and fainting fits. He was quite sensible for several years of the nature of his

complaint, that it was gradually producing an interruption to the circulation in the very seat of life, and must be mortal sooner or later. He has left a very remarkable letter to a medical friend, dated six or seven years back, in which he expresses this opinion of his disorder, and promises to be attentive to regimen at table; but as to riding fast and speaking vehemently in public, from which the physician had also dissuaded [him], he says that he must be left to the dictates of his own feelings, both in the exercise and in the discharge of his public duty; and that he must ride fast or slow, as the feeling of the moment prompted, and that he could not think of speaking in public as if his physician was one of his audience. It is very remarkable that for about two years before his death, all the painful symptoms of his disorder seemed to disappear, and he never in his life, as he himself told me, enjoyed better health. Yet upon opening the body it appeared that the large ventricle which discharges the blood through the system, was contracted to nearly one third of the natural size by the progress of the ossification. He was quite well the day preceding his death; he had arrived by a hasty journey from the Highlands, to be present at Lord President Blair's funeral, with whom he was connected by early, uninterrupted, and intimate friendship. During the two days he was in Edinburgh[1] he was chiefly occupied in assisting to arrange the family affairs of the President, whose family is but indifferently provided for. Lord Melville wrote a most affecting letter to Mr. Perceval, recommending Mrs. Blair to the protection and generosity of the public, to whom her husband has rendered such eminent services. In the evening he made his visit to the disconsolate family,

[1] Lord Melville had gone out from Edinburgh to Arniston with his daughter on Sunday evening, spent all Monday with her and the children, and returned to Edinburgh on Tuesday early.—*Arniston Memoirs*, p. 268.

whose house is next door to Lord Chief Baron's,[1] then his residence. Upon his return he supp'd with the Chief Baron, who did not remark anything particular in his appearance. As he undressed to go to bed, he directed his mournings to be prepared for next day, when the funeral of the President was to take place, and at the same time said, "I lie down satisfied, for I have done all the painful duty which friendship exacted from me," or some expression to that effect. In the morning he did not ring at his usual hour of seven, for he always rose early, and his servant, becoming alarmed, entered his room about eight, and found him dead, and all remains of vital heat quite departed. It was clear that he had never waked, but passed away in sleep to a better world where there is neither calumny, persecution, nor sorrow. One arm was laid over his breast, and the other stretched by his side,—the attitude in which he usually slept. It is a remarkable coincidence that he died on Mr. Pitt's birthday (supposing that he departed before the morning), to which must be added the singular circumstance that the early friend of his youth, whose funeral he came prepared to attend on the next day, was then lying dead within a few rooms of him. Whether the quick and animated feeling of grief did or did not hasten this strange catastrophe, can only be known to God Almighty; but many of our medical men do think that the event, though perhaps it could not have been long deferred, was precipitated by the painful emotions with which the President's death, and the sad employments which devolved upon Lord Melville in consequence, were necessarily attended.

I met him very often during his stay in Edinburgh last spring, being usually asked to meet him while he was on the round of visiting his old friends. I think my wife and I dined in company with him and Lady M. at

[1] Robert Dundas, Lord Melville's son-in-law.

different houses, six or seven days together, besides their honouring us twice with their company in Castle Street. He was in high health and spirits, and very communicative of curious information and anecdotes respecting Pitt's administration. I took the liberty to ask him why he did not write down some of these particulars for use of future historians. He promised that if I came to Dunira I should see some documents which he had preserved with such a view, but had never found leisure to arrange them.

No doubt an immense deal of valuable and curious materials for history would have [been] preserved had our dear friend pursued his resolution. He showed me in confidence a very curious state of the correspondence, which he had with the present ministers upon the last change, in which, by the way, he was but indifferently used. His loss will be severely felt by the Pitt interest in Scotland, for his long possession of power and influence had enabled him to acquire claims upon the gratitude of many individuals which will expire along with him. His domestic affairs will turn out better (or at least somewhat better) than his friends expected, but Lady Melville will be but indifferently provided for. . . . It is said the Regent has expressed a wish that something should be done for Lady M. He caused his Secretary write to the President's son-in-law, expressive of his R. H.'s desire that a provision suitable to the services the Lord President had rendered the country should be made for that family. This looks like laying himself out for popularity.

My next letter will be on a pleasanter subject, for I want to tell you, my dearest friend, that I have bought a small farm . . . and I want your advice about planting and building a cottage, and fifty things besides.—Ever, my dear friend, your truly grateful and obliged,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO THE SAME.

ASHESTIEL, *25th July* 1811.

. . . As the shortest reply to your kind inquiries about the size and nature of my cottage, I send you a sketch of the plan, marked with the accommodations which may be necessary.[1] There is nothing romantic in the situation, but the neighbourhood of a very noble and bold stream of water. The place I now inhabit is much more beautiful, but then it is not my own. I intend to plant almost the whole property, excepting about twenty-four acres above the road, for arable purposes, and the meadow near the proposed cottage for pasture. Thus in time I shall be embosom'd in a little wood, tho' at present the place is very bare. I am torturing my brains for the best means of conquering the prim regularity of artificial plantations, which I think may be done by putting in plants of different ages, and even sowing some part of the ground. Wood rises very fast with us everywhere. I shall have time enough for my plans, for I do not obtain possession till next May. A larger farm bounds my little patch to the south, which is now to be sold, and I would not hesitate to purchase it were my matters finished above stairs, but otherwise the difference between the interest of money and rent of land is too great for me to think of it. . . .

We have been christening Lady Dalkeith's little girl (would it had been a boy). She is called *Margaret*, after the Lady in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and Charlotte and I had the honour to be sponsors (as representing our betters, *cela s'entend*). . . .

Adieu, my dearest friend. I must hear your page say his lesson, and it is hard to say whether the preceptor or the scholar finds the task most wearisome. But I do not chuse he should lose ground during his holidays.—Ever your faithful and obliged, W. SCOTT.

[1] See facsimile, end of vol. i.

TO HIS MOTHER.

Ashestiel, 14*th August* 1811.

I found your letter on our arrival from Mertoun, where we had been for two or three days. I had a few lines from Jack,[1] from London, without any direction how to write to him, but I shall address to him *Cheltenham* (not Chatham as you mistake it), and as the post-office people always are alert at those watering-places, I am sure that will find him.

Two days ago I bid as far as £6000 for a farm which lay near my little retreat, but at length gave it up, as far beyond the value, especially as another much more to my purpose will be in the market in a year or two.

I might perhaps have felt bolder on this subject had I entertained further hope of having my salary made up, but the unfavourable state of the king's health makes so happy a circumstance very unlikely. I am advised to keep myself ready to go to London at a moment's warning, and have done so for this month past. I own I have little expectation from personal solicitation, and shall avoid the expense of a London journey if possible. Lord and Lady Dalkeith have been staying with us for two days. You would be delighted with them, especially with the Lady.

I grieve to observe the death of poor Mr. M. Montgomery, and can easily conceive the distress so unexpected a misfortune in the family of a kind neighbour must have given you. He was a very good and respected young man. . . .

The bairns are all well. I labour Walter daily in *Cæsar* and *Virgil*, and on Sundays in Buchanan's Psalms, a great exertion for my impatient temper; however, between yawning and scratching our head, we get on pretty well. Charlotte sends her kind love. In my present un-

[1] Major John Scott.

settled state (which pray do not mention to a human being), I cannot ask you to come here, but if it has a termination before our good weather has quite fled, I will send the carriage to meet you at Bankhouse, and you may bring Crookshanks or Jessy with you, to take care of you like a lady, as you are.—Believe me, dear Mother, your dutiful and affectionate son, WALTER SCOTT.

TO JOHN RICHARDSON.[1]

ASHESTIEL, 14*th August* 1811.

I YESTERDAY saw the *annonce* of your change of state in the papers, which gave me sincere joy. I beg you will accept my best congratulations on the subject, with my hope that you will find the marriage state what I am sure it will be to a man of your sense and temper, an alleviation of the necessary pain of life and more than a duplication of its pleasures. Mrs. Scott begs me to say that she claims an opportunity of being made acquainted with Mrs. Richardson whenever your residence in Scotland will permit, or our happening to visit London, of which last incident there is no speedy chance. If you can visit Ashestiel before you leave Scotland, you know how happy you will make us, and I will shew you a bare haugh and a bleak bank by the side of the Tweed, on which I design to break a lance with Mother Nature, and make a paradise in spite of her. I have the Tweed for my henchman for about a mile; I should not otherwise speak so *crousely*. If you can prevail on your bonny bride, therefore, to "busk her and come to the braes of Yarrow," you shall see peradventure what you shall behold.

[1] John Richardson of Kirklands, Roxburghshire. This learned lawyer had a wide practice as a Parliamentary Solicitor. He was at one time agent for the Crown in Scotland under the Whig government; and though Scott and he differed in politics, they were close friends. Mr. Richardson died in 1864.

I am greatly obliged to you for your attention to my hobby-horse, and the very curious volume you have sent me as forage for it. . . .

TO MORRITT.

September 1811.

I DON'T delay long to thank you for your kind offer of acorns, which I will accept with the greatest pleasure. . . . I assure you I will plant them in your name with my own hands and those of my little people, and we will promise ourselves a *Morritt grove* when the fit time shall come round. Next year, as I shall have, properly speaking, no place of residence in the country, I hope to be a wanderer and to brighten the chain of friendship at Rokeby. I should like very much to go into Wales if I could get any good companion, but I don't much approve of travelling alone, there are so many good things which rot in one's gizzard, as Sancho pathetically complained during the interval when the Don imposed silence upon him. I am quite happy that there is to be an union between the houses of Lindsay and Pennington. Lady Balcarres used to be my patroness many a day ago, when like a great shy lubberly [boy] as I was, I used to be very proud of the shelter of her countenance at parties and a seat in her box at the theatre, where she was a constant attendant. Lady Anne Lindsay[1] had great taste, particularly for painting. She does not indeed place mountains on their apex like that of Zarenta in Bruce's travels, or those of Selkirkshire in Miss Lydia White's drawings, but what her representations lose in the wonderful, they gain in nature and beauty. It happened by accident that a brother of Lord Balcarres dined here when I received your letter, and I made him happy by telling him his nephew met the

[1] Better known as Lady Anne Barnard, author of "Auld Robin Gray."

approbation of a friend of Lord Muncaster, one who was likely (as much as any one I know) to take a lively interest in an event which affected the happiness of a friend's family.

The Edin^r reviewers have been down on my poor *Don Roderick*,[1] hand to fist; but truly, as they are too fastidious to approve of the campaign, I should be very unreasonable if I expected them to like the celebration thereof. I agree with you respecting the lumbering weight of the stanza, and I shrewdly suspect it would require a very great poet indeed to prevent the tedium arising from the frequent recurrence of rhymes. Our language is unable to support the expenditure of so many for each stanza; even Spenser himself, with all the licences of using obsolete words and uncommon spelling, sometimes fatigues the ear. They are also very wroth with me for omitting the merits of Sir John Moore; but as I never exactly discovered in what they lay, unless in conducting his advance and retreat upon a plan the most likely to verify the desponding speculations of the foresaid reviewers, I must hold myself excused for not giving praise where I was unable to see that much was due. . . .[2]

FROM LADY HOOD.

LONDON, *July 22d*, 1811.

MY DEAR MR. SCOTT,—. . . I have been thinking much of *Don Roderick*, who is I think deservedly popular in

[1] The *Vision of Don Roderick*, published in 1811, for the benefit of the Portuguese.

[2] The Edinburgh Reviewer remarked that "in point of fact the poem begins and ends with Lord Wellington, and being written for the benefit of the plundered Portuguese, and upon a Spanish story, the thing could not well have been otherwise." But the omission of Sir John Moore's name from the list of British heroes—the only Commander-in-Chief who had fallen in the memorable contest—was not allowed to pass without remonstrance even from Scott's own personal friends. The lady, who was too soon to be heir of the line of Kintail, wrote the generous protest here printed.

many respects. You know I told you honestly at first that I thought him very far inferior to his predecessors. Yet there are some beautiful lines in the poem, for instance the whole of the *Confession*; and the distinction between the three nations is highly characteristic and spirited. There are also many of these dear little traits that I delight in, such as

> "Busaco's crest with lightning blaze."
> "And hear Corunna wail her battle won."

But, my good friend, how could you name that fatal plain and not "pour your wailings" over the lamented chief that fell there, a hero peculiarly endowed with the chivalrous and noble spirit calculated to ensure him from fostering that admiration which his ungrateful employers in the hateful spirit of party wish to deprive him of. Surely his sufferings, the slights and insults offered to him by Mr. Frere, and the ungrateful neglect and low abuse of his memory, . . . present altogether the most melancholy picture of a great mind insulted and oppressed by its enemies, that is to be met with in any history ancient or modern.

Setting all *party* aside, I think the character and story of Sir J. Moore highly poetical; fraught with honour, sensibility, and courage, he had not like Lord Wellington that *insouciance* of mind which enabled him to bear under the severest trials, nor was he attended by that propitious star which seems to guide the living hero thro' every storm into the haven of success and favour. Lord Wellington's foresight is much and deservedly applauded, but was Sir J. M. inferior, tho' no sun gilded his prospect? Yet the dark and fatal cloud which terminated his career he discerned from afar, big with all the malign influence of party spirit. . . . He knew from the beginning what must be the result of the obstacles thrown in his path, of the want of confidence of his employers, and of the being forced at such a season without resources into the heart of the

desert of Spain; if he was unsuccessful, was it then his own fault? There seems now no doubt that he was sacrificed to the advancement of his junior officer Lord W., yet he fell not a willing sacrifice but kept his ground to the last. Indeed, my dear friend, I do wish his character had been *at least* touched upon in *Don Roderick*, not so much on his own account, for his fame is already secured beyond the malice of his foes by the beautiful and impartial history of his last campaign, in which the despatches of Ministers themselves are *damning* witnesses against them, but because the total omission of the name of this illustrious chief is, and ever will be, looked upon as proceeding from party attachments in the *Bard*. You felt he was an injured man and therefore could not mention him without execrating the conduct of those whom you look upon as your friends. My opinion is, that when the day of moral as well as of political retribution shall arise, the blood of Sir John Moore will lie heavy on the souls of his enemies; it will cry for vengeance with that of the innocent victims of Copenhagen and the devoted champions of Walcheren. . . . Of the many whom I have heard praise *Don Roderick* not one but has said, "Why this strange and partial omission of Sir John Moore's very name?" So finished a character, so perfect an *hero*, must not remain uncrowned by the wreaths that you can so well bestow—doff thy party for a moment and nobly touch upon them. You who have felt so sensibly the injustice done to one of our countrymen[1] must not suffer party and prejudice to blind you to far greater injuries offered to another. Excuse, my dear Mr. Scott, the warmth and freedom with which I have expressed myself. . . . Yours most truly,

MARY HOOD.[2]

[1] Lord Melville.

[2] Scott's reply is not available, as the Seaforth collection of Scott's letters has unfortunately disappeared since Mrs. Stewart Mackenzie's death.

TO HIS MOTHER.

Ashestiel, *September 30th*, [1811].

. . . You will have, you see, no occasion for your spare bed, though little Walter is not less obliged to you, and his parents on his behalf, than if he had accepted your affectionate offer. The truth is, besides, that with the sweetest disposition in the world and very tolerable parts, the little gentleman has a propensity to idleness; I hope not greater than is natural at his age, but which often requires a stronger check than you, my dear Mother, would chuse to apply, or perhaps than any one would apply except a father. So that I think just at this period of his life he would rather be a plague than a comfort to you. He reads from one to two hours Latin with me every day, so I hope to keep him up to the class, even if he should be a few days later of joining them, especially as his memory is one of the strongest I have observed. They will all be in town about the middle of October, and will be proud to attend you in such numbers and at such times as may conduce most to your amusement.

TO MR. HARTSTONGE.[1]

Ashestiel, *24th October* 1811.

. . . I am glad you saw the tomb of poor Burns. The simple inscription you observed was the composition of his wife, the once lovely Jean. It is a disgrace to our country that something more worthy of his fame is not erected over his grave, but altho' frequently proposed, it has uniformly fallen to the ground, from want of subscriptions, or from some disagreement about the nature of the monu-

[1] Matthew Weld Hartstonge, a pleasant Irish gentleman residing in Dublin, who was of service to Scott in his edition to *Swift*. He was a frequent correspondent.

ment to be erected; indeed, we are not famous for doing anything to preserve the memory of our Bards. I have been these twenty years member of a club for erecting a monument upon Ednam Hill to the memory of Thomson, but alas, we have never to this day been able to collect above a very few hundred pounds, totally inadequate to making anything respectable.[1] . . . I am ever yours truly obliged,

WALTER SCOTT.

[1] The monument to Thomson referred to was at last erected at Ednam in 1820. But Burns had not to wait so long for recognition, as the fine mausoleum, now in St. Michael's churchyard, Dumfries, was finished in 1815, and the poet's remains transferred to it.

CHAPTER VIII

1812

EDINBURGH AND ABBOTSFORD

"And shall the minstrel harp in silence rest
By silver Tweed, or Yarrow hung with flowers;
Or where, reflected on Loch Katrine's breast,
High o'er the pine-clad hills Benledi towers;
Save when the blast that sweeps the mountain crest,
Wakes the wild chorus of Æolian song;
Save when at twilight grey the dewy west,
Strays with soft touch the trembling chords among;
Whilst as the notes with wayward cadence rise,
Some love-lorn maniac's plaint seems swelling to the skies."

Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. iii. p. lxxxviii (1810).

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1812—AGE 41.

Removes from Ashestiel to Abbotsford, May 1812.

Visits Flodden and Rokeby with Family in September.

Patrick Carey's Poems in *Edinburgh Register*, vol. iii. pt. 2, pp. 67-76.

Rokeby published, 4to, by Ballantyne & Co., Dec.

Bridal of Triermain in preparation.

Christmas at Mertoun.

CHAPTER VIII.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

1st January, 1812.

My dear Friend,—There was some learned man or other, whose name I have forgot, that invented a theory to account for all the petty misadventures, unlucky chances, and whimsical *contretemps* of life, by supposing a certain description of inferior dæmons not capable of any very great or extensive calamity such as earthquakes, or revolutions, or famines, or volcanoes, but who were just equal to oversetting tea-urns, breaking china, carrying notes to wrong addresses, letting in unacceptable visitors, and keeping out our friends whom we wished to see, and organising all the *petite guerre* which is so constantly waged against our Christian patience. It is owing, I fancy, to the intervention of a whole hive of these little diablotins that I have postponed from day to day acknowledging your kind remembrance, in hopes every post which arrived would give me leave to begin by assuring you that my matter in which you so kindly interest yourself is concluded. . . .

O the beautiful cottage you sent me! But there are practical objections affecting the extent and irregularity of roof, which in our severe climate can scarcely by any labour be kept water-tight where there are many flanks, I have borrowed several hints from it, however, and I will send you a plan and elevation of my intended cottage. I do not intend to begin it this next summer. There is a small farm-house on the place, into which by dint of compression

I think I can cram my family. This will give me a year to prepare my accompaniments of wood, walks, and shrubbery, and moreover to save a little money, clear off old scores, and encounter my lime and mortar engagements courageously. During our short holidays I was working at Abbotsford in the midst of the snow for three days together; but I was recalled by my little people taking the measles—very favourably, however. I am afraid if I permit you to chuse a page between my two boys, you will desert the eldest for the youngest. Your original attendant is a boy of an excellent disposition, sensible, bold, and at the same time remarkably gentle and sweet-tempered; but the little fellow, if it please God to spare him, will turn out something uncommon, for he has a manner of thinking and expressing himself altogether original. You shall chuse, however, when you come to my cottage; but I shall not be surprised if a fair lady prefers the striking to the reasonable, especially when both are amiable and good-tempered. They are all recovering as well as possible.

You ask about my business in the H. of Lords and my exceptions at Lord Holland. It was a very silly business, devised I believe by Lord Lauderdale, merely to injure my feelings, by mentioning the misfortunes of my brother, at a time and in a manner when it was impossible for me to have an opportunity of making any reply or defence.[1] . . .

As to Lord Holland, of whom I always had a very different opinion, and who I think is (politics apart) a worthy and amiable man, I was only desirous he should know the next time he had occasion to mention any one's name in public, he would expose himself to disagreeable feelings in private if he did not fix his charge upon secure grounds. The feeling was born with me not to brook a

[1] See *Life*, vol. iii. pp. 234-40.

disparaging look from an emperor, when I had the least means of requiting it in kind, and I have only to hope it is combined with the anxious wish never to deserve one were it from a beggar.

I am not surprised that Tom Campbell[1] disappointed your expectations in society. To a mind peculiarly irritable, and galled, I fear, by the consciousness of narrow circumstances, there is added a want of acquaintance with the usual intercourse of the world, which, like many other things, can only be acquired at an early period of life. Besides, I have always remarked that literary people think themselves obliged to take somewhat of a constrained and affected turn in conversation, seeming to consider themselves as less a part of the company, than something which the rest were come to see and wonder at. If your Ladyship's friendship is not too partial in supposing me less quizzical than my neighbours, it is not owing to any good sense of my own, but to the fortunate circumstances which connected me with good company, and led me to feel myself at home in it long before I made any literary essays. Since my success, I have always endeavoured to play my little part in society as quietly and good-humouredly as I could.—Ever your truly obliged,

W. Scott.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

N.D. [1812.]

. . . I have got a beautiful design for my cottage from Stark of Glasgow, a young man of exquisite taste, and who must rise very high in his profession if the bad health under which he suffers does not keep him down or cut

[1] Scott knew Thomas Campbell well. An amusing instance is given of the latter's shyness and unsociableness as early as 1802, when the two young poets met at an autumn gathering at Minto Castle. See Sir Gilbert Elliot's *Life*, and Beattie's *Campbell*.

him short. He has most gentlemanlike and amiable manners, and his whole appearance indicates genius, but not less clearly that it will be but shortlived; I was greatly concerned for him the few days he spent at Ashestiel with me. I do not intend to proceed upon this great adventure for a while as yet; the little farm-house has five tolerable rooms in it, kitchen included, and if all come to all we can adopt your suggestion and make a bed in the barn; so you see I keep the leeside of prudence in my proceedings. While I was watching my infant or rather my embryo oaks you have been wandering under the shade of those celebrated by Pope and Denham, or in a still earlier age by James and Chaucer. How often have you visited the site of Herne's oak and called up the imaginary train of personages who fill the stage around it in representation? And was I obliged to your kindness or that of George Ellis for a bag of acorns from Windsor Forest which reached me lately? I wish you had found each other out; he is one of the most amiable and entertaining men in the world, and his wife a good-humoured and lively woman. Their residence is at Sunning Hill, probably not very distant from yours. I conclude Dr. Baillie is now released from his melancholy and hopeless attendance on the Good old King; we are here alarm'd and stirr'd with unauthenticated rumours concerning the state of the Prince Regent's health. God forbid any of them be founded on truth. . . .—Ever, my dear friend, affectionately and respectfully yours, W. SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINR., 23*d January* 1812.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—I should be very unjust to your kindness did I not take an early opportunity to inform you that the pension business is at length completely and

finally settled. . . . I thought it proper after the pension had been fixed, to offer my colleague Mr. Home to make up to him any difference between his pension and what he formerly drew, which he has in part accepted. . . . I delayed this information both that I might assure you of my final settlement with Mr. H., and also that I might send you a plan of my cottage. But though I have succeeded in the former and most material point, the procrastination of the architect, which, poor fellow, is owing to very precarious health, has hitherto prevented my sending the sketch and plan. We are now, my dearest friend, as comfortable in our circumstances as even your kindness could wish us to be. Neither my wife nor I have the least wish to enlarge our expense in any respect, as indeed our present mode of life is of that decent kind which, without misbecoming our own situation, places us according to the fashions and habits of our country at liberty to mix in the best society here. So that we shall have a considerable saving fund for the bairns. . . .

The good we meet with in this world is always blended with qualifying bitterness, and mine has been heavy enough. I do not reckon in this the anxiety I have experienced [on account of illness] in my family.

. . . But what I must really set down as a calamity are the deaths of poor John Leyden and the excellent Duke of Buccleuch. The former was known to the Marquis. . . . The Duke of Buccleuch[1] had been long breaking, and I thought the last time I saw him (about a month before his death) that the hand of fate was upon him. Yet his family, accustomed to his daily and gradual decline, were not much alarmed, and the final close was very sudden, as he died in the arms of his son, who had been his nurse and secretary during his illness, and had scarcely ever quitted his room. He was buried on the 17th in the family vault at Dalkeith.

[1] Henry, third Duke of Buccleuch, died Jan. 11th, 1812.

and I never saw so many weeping eyes at the funeral of either high or low. Everything was by his own express desire as private as was possible, which indeed was necessary, for, considering that the whole border counties had expressed a desire to send in their Yeomanry and local Militia Corps, and his situation as Lord Lieutenant of this county, there would have been at least ten thousand men in attendance. As it was arranged, only forty or fifty noblemen and gentlemen were invited, who were connected with the family either by relationship, clanship, or strict friendship. The Duchess Dowager has behaved with the firmness of principle, supporting the whole family under their distress by her own strength of mind. My friend Lord Dalkeith succeeds to the power and fortune of his father, with some points which these evil times require; for with all his father's good-nature he has something in him which will not allow it to be trampled upon, and I think that in our homely ballad rhyme he is likely to prove—

——a *hedge* about his friends,
A *heckle* to his foes——

When I tell your Ladyship that a heckle is the many-toothed implement with which hemp is broken and *scutched*, I think you will understand the allusion.

I mention these particulars because I believe your Ladyship is interested in the family. I hope soon to send you the drawings and plan; meanwhile, I ever am, your Ladyship's truly obliged and faithful, W. S.[1]

[1] Lady Abercorn replies—"As your success in life is amongst the very few things that can give me real pleasure, you may believe your two last letters have been most welcome. I do most sincerely rejoice that the business is completely settled, and that you are now quite independent of power and party. . . . I hope before I leave this world to see you once by your own fireside with all your family about you. I could never see a man I more highly respect and admire, and I do assure you I have more pride in your calling me your dearest friend than I should in being so considered by the greatest Monarch in the world."

TO MORRITT.

MELROSE, *2d March* 1812.

YOUR letter, my dear Morritt, found me in this place dirtying myself every morning to the knees in hopes of making clean walks for Mrs. Morritt at Abbotsford, and throwing my money, not indeed upon the waters, but upon the earth, in hopes of seeing it after many days, in the shape of shrubs and trees. The pleasure I have in this work, perhaps from its novelty, but I would fain hope from the nature of the thing itself, is indescribably interesting to me. I have got nature in a very naked state to work upon, but a brae, a haugh, and a fair river furnish good component parts, and the very trial and exertion necessary to make out the rest is happiness itself. It is very shameful in me to have been so long in acknowledging your kind information about your Memorabilia. My work *Rokeby* does and must go forward, or my trees and enclosures might perchance stand still. But I destroyed the first Canto after I had written it fair out, because it did not quite please me. I shall keep off people's kibes if I can, for my plan though laid during the civil wars has little to do with the politics of either party, being very much confined to the adventures and distresses of a particular family.

I must certainly refresh my memory with the scenery, and brighten the chain of friendship at *Rokeby* before I can make great progress in my task. But your kind memoranda have helped me greatly in the meantime. I must unquestionably read *Roncesvalles*,[1] from which I expect great pleasure. For reviewing it I can hardly under-

[1] *Roncesvalles* is the title of a poem by Richard Wharton, then Secretary to the Treasury, which Morritt had recommended strongly to Scott. The previous "Treasury poet" referred to was Charles Pybus, who was Commissioner from 1797 to 1803, and published a folio in 1800 entitled the *Sovereign*.

take, considering the numerous and important affairs of Abbotsford on earth, and *Rokeby* on paper. If however I was sure that I could do it in a way to please the author, I should scarcely decline. Certainly he is the first Treasury poet since the splendid epistle of *Paul Pybus*, and should therefore be encouraged by his brethren, as a rich man is always considered as a credit to his relations.

I was once the most enormous devourer of the Italian romantic poetry, which indeed is the only poetry of their country which I ever had much patience for; for after all that has been said of Petrarch and his school, I am always tempted to exclaim like honest Christopher Sly, "Marvellous good matter, would it were done." But with Charlemagne and his paladins I could dwell for ever.

I grieve to hear of Lady Aberdeen's disorder, so young and beautiful, and apparently so good and amiable.[1] But consumption seems often to seize upon those victims whom we would most wish to exempt from its grasp. Her brother Lord Hamilton is, I am afraid, dying of the same disorder.

That Lady Hood should have been so far removed from us and her friends is a hard circumstance. But I comfort myself with the reflection that it was right for her to go. India will amuse her better than she expects. She will like the splendour and the dignity of her situation. She will also be in her right place, and that is everything, where keen feeling and great vivacity are predominant. . . . The good old Duke of Buccleuch is also dead, and has not left a kinder or more generous heart behind him. If you meet the present Duke in London, in society, pray make up to him on my recommendation and in my name. He is a good *cut* of a Border chief, firm, manly, and well-principled, and only differing from his father by having something in him that will not

[1] Lady Aberdeen died 29th February 1812.

make it safe to return his kindness with ingratitude, and then to apply for fresh favours, which was often successfully practised on his father. . . .

FROM JOANNA BAILLIE.

March 4th, 1812.

. . . But to return to my purse;[1] I hope you will like it, and I have made it strong enough that your heavy gold coins may not break thro' it. If it should do you little good, it has done me a great deal; for I have worked with pleasure at it for some time past, when I could be pleased with no other employment. It put me in mind of an old woman in Hamilton who was haunted by the Deil; and she got some flax to spin from my mother, which proved a great blessing to her, for she returned in a few days, telling my mother with great delight that as long as she was employed in spinning the minister's yarn the *Deil* had no power over her. Don't suppose, however, that working for you has charmed down a very evil spirit, though I confess it has had power over a dull, and often a very cross one.

We have all admired the old mouth-piece, and long much to know the history of it, if any there be, besides its being old.

I doubt the Laird of Abbotsford has not told me truly and honestly all the rooms that are to be in his new house, and that the museum-room has been omitted. Rob Roy's armour (for I suppose you have got it; pray let me know if you have), this purse, with its old coins, and many other things gathered and to be gathered, must require a place to be kept in, and we shall see there some years hence a collection like that at Strawberry Hill—the

[1] For an account of the silk purse knitted by Joanna Baillie for Scott's "Nicknacketories," see *Life*, vol. iii. pp. 392-3.

collection of a poetical, sentimental antiquarian, where such things as the gloves of Mr. Hampden have their value, along with the armour of Francis the First. But I hope this room will be filled with contributions from your numerous admirers, rather than purchases from curiosity-brokers; tho' your last friendly letter has informed me of what gives me great pleasure, and I ought not now to be so much alarmed at the liberality and magnificence of your ideas. Well may you prosper, and fortunate may you be all your life long! and may those you leave behind you be so also!

It was very kind of you to tell me of the happy change in what regards the salary of your office, and since it is told me in confidence I shall keep it for my own private satisfaction. To encourage you in your prospects as a country laird, I must tell you that the trees I planted in Gloucestershire are doing well, and the land on which they are planted is nearly doubled in value since my brother purchased it about 7 years ago. He then paid £30,000 for it, and he could sell it now for £55,000. I must say, however, he has spent or *misspent* nearly £10,000 upon it. But I must say no more on this subject lest you think me entirely worldly in my sympathy for my friends. Now, though I do wish those I love to be comfortably rich, it is not the first blessing I think of on their behalf. To see how your laurels flourish in this country, growing every year deeper in root and sturdier in stem, gives me more pleasure than all the lands of Abbotsford. . . . I suppose you know that your brother-poet Campbell is going soon to give Lectures on Poetry at the British Institution. Mr. Sotheby has persuaded him into this, and I hope he will do himself credit. His remuneration is to be, I understand, £200 for 6 lectures. I hope his Scotch tongue will not stand greatly in the way of his popularity; but in reading specimens of poetry to

an English audience it must be a considerable disadvantage, for his is a bad kind of Scotch.[1]

TO THE DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUCH.

ABBOTSFORD, 20*th March* 1812.

MADAM,—I am just honoured with your Grace's commission, which you may depend upon my executing with all possible delicacy on my return to Edinburgh, which takes place on Monday. The poor bard (I will not, as my *précieuse* friend Miss Seward once expressed herself, name his thrice unpoetical name) is, I fear, a person whom it will indeed be difficult to serve to any essential purpose; yet nature has been liberal to him in many respects, and it is perhaps hard for those born under better auspices to censure his deficencies very severely.

I am here as busy as possible, dressing up this little spot, which is, to say truth, as bare a doll as any of your Grace's young ladies ever made bibs and tuckers for. But the Spaniards have a comfortable proverb, namely: "Time and I against any other two." I was much surprised and gratified by Mr. Macdonald's[2] kind and most acceptable attention, who sent me some beautiful fruit trees of his own grafting, which I have just seen carefully planted. This is being a counsellor in good earnest, not only to give advice, but the means of following it. I trust one day, like good Master Justice Shallow, to press the Duke to stay and eat a last year's pippin of my own raising. . . .

TO HIS DAUGHTER.

MERTOUN HOUSE, 19*th April* 1812.

MY DEAR SOPHIA,—Mama and I got your letter, and

1 Scott replies: "I think the brogue may be got over if he will not trouble himself by attempting to correct it, but read with fire and feeling; he is an animated reciter, but I never heard him read."—*Life*, vol. iii. p. 392.

2 Mr. Macdonald, head-gardener to the Duke.

are happy to think that our little people are all well and happy.

In Lord Hailes' *Annals* you will find a good deal about Melrose Abbey, which you must fix in your recollection, as we are now going to live so near it. It was founded by David the First, one of the best of our Scottish kings. We have had very cold weather here indeed, but to-day it is more favourable. The snow and frost has prevented things getting on at Abbotsford so well as I could wish, but a great deal has been done.

I expect to find that Walter has plied his lessons hard, and given satisfaction to Mr. Brown, and Ann and Charles are I daresay both very good children. You must kiss them all for me, and pat up little Wallace.[1] Finette[2] has been lame, but she is now quite well. I beg you will remember

[1] The following letter is indorsed in Scott's hand, "Mr. William Dunlop, with a dog christened Wallace." . . .

GLASGOW, *July 5th*, 1809.

DEAR SIR,

It is nearly two years ago, when availing myself of your polite hospitality at Ashestiel, that I undertook to procure you a West Country (Scotch) Terrier. I found the task more difficult than I imagined, as the breed which I had in view is now very scarce, nor indeed do I believe I would have been able to fulfil my engagement, had it not been for the assistance of my friend Miss Dunlop of Dunlop. As soon as ever she understood for whom the animal I was in quest of was intended, Dunlop, Stewarton, and all the neighbouring parishes were unsuccessfully ransacked, nor would the young gentleman who will be delivered to you along with this, have ever barked, had it not been for the trouble this lady took in accomplishing a conference between his Dame and Sire . . . who had hitherto resided in different parts of Ayrshire. In truth he was brought into the world for the express purpose, as she wrote me, of showing her gratitude to the Poet who had so often beguiled and delighted the solitary life she leads. I wish, after all this, he may turn out worth sending. All that I can say of the race is, that in addition to fighting, killing rats, drawing badgers, and such like canine accomplishments, they are noted for sagacity and companionableness. If you mean to perform any operation on his tail or ears, it is now full time. He has, as you will perceive, hitherto been kept sacred. . . . Believe me, your obliged and faithful servant,

WILL DUNLOP.

[2] A beautiful setter with soft silken hair, long pendant ears, and a mild eye, "the parlour favourite," as she appeared to Washington Irving five years later.

me to Grandmama when you see her, and also present my kind compliments and Mama's to Miss Miller.[1] We are now at Mertoun, but return to Ashestiel to-morrow, and I think we shall be at home on Thursday or Friday, so the cook can have something ready for us,—a beef-steak or mutton-chop—in case we are past your dinner-hour. Tell Walter I will not forget his great cannon, and believe me, my dear Sophia, your affectionate Papa,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO M. W. HARTSTONGE.

ASHESTIEL, 20*th April* 1812.

DEAR SIR,— . . . I have been shaping a tale of the civil war, in which an Irishman makes a conspicuous character. I only hope I shall be able to express in it my sense of the high qualities of a nature more nearly allied to my own than the fire of the former and the prudence of the latter is always willing to admit. An Irishman, to use the phrase of the kitchen, with which I am just now much at home, for old Macbeth,[2] Charlotte and I and the lame dairy-maid, are keeping house by ourselves, and all club their skill to make up the dinner,—an Irishman then, comes a little sooner to the boiling heat than we do, and we on the contrary smother in our caution, not only the flash which offends, but the gleams that cheer and delight society. We both endure hardships better than our imperial neighbours of England, but the Scotchman does it through hope of better, and the Irishman through a gay indifference, in which he has this great advantage, that as he hopes for nothing, he cannot be disappointed. I need not add that with all this national interest I am delighted with every anecdote of Irish manners and antiquities. I delight in O'Neal of the nine hostages and all his

[1] The children's governess.

[2] The Scotch butler, who used to be addressed by Kemble at Ashestiel, as "Cousin Macbeth."

paraphernalia of warriors and creaghts, out of which more of the picturesque parts of poetry may be wrought than out of a dozen battles of Jena or Austerlitz. The *Edinburgh Register* is shortly to be forthcoming, and I have long delayed writing to you, because I expected to send you a proof sheet of the *Trumpet and Church Bell*,[1] with which I have taken great liberties. You will find the poem remains entirely yours in language and sentiment, but is considerably expanded, somewhat changed in arrangement, and a good deal chastised as to rhymes, in which you are not uniformly correct, which is not prudent, because it is a fault every fool can discover.

As the poem stands, there is not a line in it of which the germ did not exist in your hurried sketch; and I think, tho' my part has only been that of the painter or plasterer to the mansion already built, you will find it improved, and will not be displeased with me for putting your name in front of it. . . .

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ABBOTSFORD, BY MELROSE,
3*d May* 1812.

JUDGING, my dearest friend, of the distress in which you must have been involved by the late most unhappy incident,[2] I have not ventured to interrupt it by any letter of mine; sensible I could offer no consolation but that which is naturally derived from the lapse of time, and the respect which we owe to the decrees of Providence. Alas! when I think of the inroads made by fate upon the social circle I met at the Priory some years ago, and upon our mutual friends, it seems like recollecting another world. To the

[1] The verses as revised by Scott are in the *Annual Register*, vol. iii. pt. 2, p. xciii.

[2] The death of Lord Abercorn's daughter, the Countess of Aberdeen.

two dear and valuable members of the family, I may add that of Lord Melville, your ardent and firm friend, and of others with whom we are mutually connected. Even the death of the Duchess of Gordon,[1] though certainly a person not to be mentioned in the same breath with any of the others, is a striking deprivation. She filled a certain place in Scottish society, and will be missed both from the good and the harm which she did in it. . . .

My own little matters being all settled, I have been amusing myself with planting and decorating as well as I can the banks of the Tweed at Abbotsford, which is the name of my own possession. Your Ladyship may believe that where no one else can see anything but fallow and broom and furze, I am anticipating lawn and groves. This horrid weather, however, bids fair to baffle my hopes for one season at least.

I am very apprehensive of the consequences of a scarcity at this moment, especially from the multitude of French prisoners,[2] who are scattered through the small towns in this country, as I think very improvidently. As the peace of this county is intrusted to me, I thought it necessary to state to the Justice Clerk that the arms of the local militia were kept without any guard in a warehouse at Kelso; that there was nothing to prevent the prisoners there, at Selkirk, and at Jedburgh, from joining any one night, and making themselves master of that depôt; that the Sheriffs of Roxburgh and Selkirk, in order to put down such a commotion, could only command about three troops of yeomanry to be collected from a great distance, and these were to attack about 500 disciplined men, who in the event supposed, would be fully provided with arms and ammunition, and might, if any

[1] The Duchess Jane died in London, and her remains were interred at Kinrara at her own request.

[2] There were about 50,000 French prisoners in Britain at this time.

alarm should occasion the small number of troops now at Berwick to be withdrawn, make themselves masters of that seaport, the fortifications of which, although ruinous, would serve to defend them until cannon was brought against them. A beautiful confusion this would make in the present unsettled state of the manufacturers in the north of England. Truly, though not very ambitious of a hangman's office, I think I could willingly do that good turn for some of the orators of the London Common Hall, who are, for the pleasure of hearing themselves talk, doing incalculable mischief by inflaming the minds of the common people through the whole country.

Is not the change of parties like a dream, and did you ever see anything so like a game at commerce as the opposition picking up the Princess of Wales so soon as they had lost the Prince Regent? We addressed him on the 30th April at the Head Court, where they put me in the chair, and made me draw the county address.

I have nothing to add, my dearest friend, except that I long to have a line from you, were it only to say how the Marquis is. I trust the late increase of Lord H.'s family has had some effect in alleviating his distress. God pity poor Lord Aberdeen—he has had a heavy blow.[1]—Ever, dear Lady Abercorn, your truly, faithful, and respectful,

W. SCOTT.

TO MORRITT.

4th May 1812.

MY DEAR MORRITT,—Nothing can exceed the tale of the silver chalice. I will maintain that in point of law the question it afforded was a prettier point to be mooted

[1] Lord Aberdeen's grief was so intense at this time, and for many months afterwards, that he believed the spirit of his young wife appeared to him almost daily. In a very sacred diary kept by him such pathetic entries as "Vidi!" "Vidi sed obscuriorem," "Verissima dulcissima imago," are of frequent occurrence. . . .—See Sir A. Gordon's *Memoir*, p. 18.

than the celebrated question of the black and white horses. What would the Civilians Benkerschorkius and Pagenstecherus[1] have made of it, if they had come to dispute whether *form* or *substance* should be the rule of classifying this renown'd utensil; and if the schoolmen had got upon such a topic, what a mist of metaphysics would the splendid vase have been involved in? Truly Lucky Finlayson's apostrophe was but a faint and fleeting ejaculation compared to this kindly and doughty altercation. I hope the Lady will not prove so far dissatisfied with the fame of this luminous piece of household goods as to leave it at home, and reconcile herself to more humble conveniences upon the next excursion. She cannot, I fear, hope to give any other implement the same celebrity which the beautiful Duchess of Hamilton conferred upon a superb china punch-bowl, long preserved at the Inn of Howgate, near Edinburgh, and never produced by the Landlady, Jenny Dods, without relating the circumstances to which it owed its renown. I would therefore have her abide by her vessel of Potosi, which I trust will yet afford us more sport. I would have it stolen and recovered, and an objection taken to the indictment of the thief, that the vessel he had abstracted was inaccurately described as a silver tankard. By-the-bye, such pieces of plate seem to be singularly liable to occasion odd scrapes. There is a huge implement of this metal at Arniston, not reserved for the commodity of any individual, but usually brought in after dinner, when there is a large company, for the general use and benefit. It chanced one unlucky day that there was a good deal of singing after dinner, which detained the ladies some time longer in the eating-room than was usual. The bell was rung for some purpose or other, when, to the utter astonishment and confusion of all present, the ancient Butler, a man of a most reverend and

[1] See *Heart of Midlothian*, W. N. (48 vols.), vol. xi. p. 377.

dignified appearance, having no doubt that it was the well-known signal, stalked into the room bearing in both hands this brilliant heirloom, equally remarkable for its huge size and its antique appearance, which however admitted of no equivocation respecting its use. He had fairly marched to the top of the room and placed his burden on its usual throne, before he perceived his blunder. His exclamation of "God forgive me," his hasty retreat, shrouding with a napkin the late object of his solemn entry, and the confusion of the good company, may be more easily conceived than described. This story the Chief Baron tells with great humour.

I agree very much in what you say of *Childe Harold*. Though there is something provoking and insulting both to morality and to feeling in his misanthropical humour, it gives nevertheless an odd pungency to his descriptions and reflections, and upon the whole it is a poem of most extraordinary power, and may rank its author with our first poets. I see the *Edinburgh Review* has haul'd its wind, which I suppose is as much owing to Lord Byron's political conversion as to their conviction of his increasing powers. . . . What say you of Lord Wellington? If these *fainéants* who have been the bane of the Spanish cause do not prevent its success, I think nothing else ultimately will prevail against it.

As for the house and the poem, there are twelve masons hammering at the one, and one poor noddle at the other, so they are both in progress. Charlotte begs her kindest respects to Mrs. Morritt, and hoping to hear from you soon, I am, ever truly yours, WALTER SCOTT.

TO CHARLES CARPENTER.

ABBOTSFORD, *August 4th*, 1812.

As we advance in life our social comforts are gradually abridged. Do think of this, my dear Carpenter, and come

back to Britain while the circle of your friends is not materially diminished. I am happy to see, from your last expressions, that affairs promise to let you escape from India in a year or two. As health is better than wealth, I trust you will hasten the period of your return as much as possible, and pray send us early intelligence, as I shall make a point to meet you in London at least, if not at Portsmouth. Our private affairs continue prosperous, and our family healthy; they are all fine children, but little Charles, the youngest, promises to possess extraordinary talent. My income has been greatly increased by my predecessor, or rather colleague in office, being placed by Government upon a superannuated pension, which gave me access to almost all the emoluments of the office, to which otherwise I would only have succeeded after his death. To bring this about was one of the last labours of poor Lord Melville, whose steady friendship for me was active in my favour to the very verge of his life. Encouraged by this good fortune, my lease of Ashestiel being out, and it being necessary as Sheriff that I should reside in Selkirkshire occasionally, I have bought a farm of about 120 acres lying along the side of the Tweed. . . . I have set to work to plant and to improve, and I hope to make Abbotsford a very sweet little thing in the course of a few years. Till we shall have leisure and time and money to build a little mansion, we have fixed our residence in the little farm-house, where our only sitting-room is about twelve feet square, and all the others in proportion: so that, upon the whole, we live as if we were on board ship. But besides the great amusement I promise myself in dressing this little farm, it is convenient and pleasant as lying in my native country and among those to whom I am most attached by relationship and friendship. We have also a very pleasant friend of yours in our neighbourhood, the fine old veteran, General Goudie. He lives about three

miles from us, and was here the other morning as keen as a school-boy about a fishing party to a small lake in our vicinity; he and I have a debate about a new harpoon for sticking salmon, which he invented, and which I have the boldness to think I have altered and improved; he speaks very often of you and will be delighted to see you. . . . Domestic matters are not so comfortable; there have been, as you will see from the papers, very serious disturbances among the manufacturers of the Midland Counties, which by the mistaken lenity of Government have been suffered to assume an alarming degree of organisation. Correspondences have been carried on by the malcontents through every manufacturing town in England and Scotland, and the infection had even reached the little thriving community of Galashiels, a flourishing village in my district. I was not long, however, of breaking these associations and securing their papers; the principal rogue escaped me, for having heard I was suddenly come into the place, he observed, "It 's not for nought that the hawk whistles," and so took to the hills and escaped.

Charlotte is in very good health, and begs her kindest remembrances. She proposes to write, but I will not vouch for her letter, knowing her talents for procrastination in such matters. There is a noble estate with a fine old house and park to be sold within ten miles of us. I wish you were here to buy it, as it would suit you very well for a summer residence. Charlotte joins in kindest regards to Mrs. Carpenter, and believe me, dear Carpenter, ever your affectionate friend, WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ABBOTSFORD, *2nd September* 1812.

MY DEAR LADY MARCHIONESS,—I have not heard from you this long time, at which I begin to be a little fretted,

as I am very desirous to know what your Ladyship and the Marquis are doing. We saw the Kembles a day in Edinr. where I went on purpose from this place to see him on the stage. I think he played Coriolanus and Cato as near perfection as I can conceive theatrical performance. His whole appearance in the former was the patrician warrior, and in Cato the Stoic senator and patriot. It was absolutely enchanting, and formed one of the few exhibitions which I could have seen begun again when the curtain had dropped.

Here I am in full possession of my kingdom of Barataria. . . . We are all screwed into the former farmhouse. Our single sitting-room is twelve feet square, and the room above it subdivided for cribs to the children; an old coal-hole makes our cellar, a garret above the little kitchen with a sort of light closet make bedroom and dressing-room, decorated—lumbered, my wife says—with all my guns, pistols, targets, broadswords, bugle-horns, and old armour. Then I have the livelong day to toil among masons and workmen not few in number, for I assembled forty or fifty round a bonfire on the news of the battle of Salamanca. To be sure there was the attraction of an ocean of whisky-punch, which brought in several occasional recruits. The banks of the Tweed looked very merry on this glorious occasion, and the light of the various bonfires reminded me of the old times when they were kindled for another purpose—

> "Red glared the beacon on Pownell,
> On Eildon hills were three,
> The bugle-horns on moor and fell
> Were heard continually."

The bugle-horns, however, have given way to the pipes and violins, which were all put into requisition on the occasion, and the people—at least my subjects—danced almost the whole night. As for my more grave occupa-

tions, my little plantation is thriving very well, and my offices are in a fair way of being completed. I have also got a good wall built around a sheltered and fertile spot of about three-quarters of an acre, which I hope will make a clever little garden. In the meantime, I am not a little puzzled in my attempts to acquire some knowledge of shrubs and trees, especially those that are not indigenous. I am reduced to such shifts that I asked a lady the other day what shrub it was that had a leaf like a saddle, and was much edified by learning that it was the tulip-tree. By such awkward steps do learners ascend the ladder of knowledge.

I am puzzling my brains about a poem called *Rokeby*. I have had it long in hand, but I threw the whole into the fire about a month since, being satisfied that I had corrected the spirit out of it, as a lively pupil is sometimes flogged into a dunce by a severe schoolmaster. Since I have resumed the pen in my old Cossack manner, I have succeeded rather more to my own mind. It is a tale of the Civil Wars in 1643, but has no reference to history or politics, only embracing the adventures and distresses of a particular family of Cavaliers.

Adieu! my dear friend. All this nonsense is meant to extort from you an answer; let it but say you and the family are well, and, howsoever short, it will be most acceptable to your truly faithful and respectful,

WALTER SCOTT.

FROM LADY ABERCORN.

Sept. 1812.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I cannot deny but that I have been a little angry with you, for it is now about 3 months since I was told that you were writing a poem, and that the subject was of the Civil Wars and the end of Charles the 1st's time. I concluded, as I had done before when others of your poems were announced to me, that it was a story,

for I *was certain* you would have told me as soon as any one; but I now am used to it, and shall always believe all your acquaintances know everything before me. So much for that, but in the meantime I am not the less anxious to read it, and shall send for one as soon as it comes out. I make no doubt of its merit, but I confess I wonder whether, if you have not *seriously destroyed* the first, you would let me read it. I really cannot bear the idea that you should have consigned to the flames so much of your writing, which I make no doubt, though it might be inferior to your *Cossack manner*, is still better than any one else could do, and if you have a mind to make your peace with me let me have it; you may send it by the mail, it will come very safe. . . . Lord Aberdeen left us nearly two months ago. He was here about six weeks with his 3 children, and I do really think they are as lovely children as I ever saw. His eldest daughter (they are all girls) is without exception the cleverest girl I ever saw. She is about five years old, and quite a magnificent-looking child, with a still more magnificent understanding. If you should see them, observe that creature. She used every day to have a new poem or new fable to repeat to Lord Abercorn after dinner, and she repeated as well as Kemble could. I certainly think her quite a prodigy. Lord Aberdeen was better in spirits than I could have hoped, but it will be long before he recovers himself.[1]

TO LADY LOUISA STUART.

20th Sept. 1812.

My dear Lady Louisa,—Your most encouraging, as well as beautiful verses, joined to our friend Morritt's remonstrances, have given a new spur to the sides of my intent, and I wrote to Morritt that I would make a raid on him with bag and baggage, scrip and scrippage, about

[1] These attractive children all died young.

Monday. But just after my letter was despatched, I was made acquainted that my attendance was indispensable upon the 5th, at a meeting of Mr. Don's friends preparatory to the head court of Free-holders on the 6th, for that my eloquence was to be put in requisition for that day. Mr. Don is, you know, the Duke of Buccleuch's candidate for Roxburghshire, and I believe the Duke has few things of a political nature more at heart than his success, so I must do my possible, however little that may be. The only effect this will have is to expedite my journey somewhat, as my stay will be rather more brief at Rokeby than I had reckoned upon this morning. On Thursday night we sleep at Edgerston, upon the border, Friday at Carbridge or Hexham, and I hope we shall find it possible to get to Rokeby Saturday night, as the distance cannot be above forty miles. But if bad roads, etc. render this impossible, which is likely enough, we shall, God willing, be at Rokeby on Sunday before dinner, where I trust we shall still find your Ladyship a tenant of that hospitable mansion.

The poem has no fault unless I could find in my heart to wish it had a more worthy subject, but I am not able to bring my mind to that point of self-denial, so I can only promise to do my best to merit the encouragement your Ladyship so kindly gives me. I do not greatly fear the professed critics if I can possibly keep hold of the reading public, which can only be done by an interesting narrative.

"Ugly Meg" is a much larger drawing than any at Bothwell, on another, and I think an improved plan. I hope one day to exhibit it to your Ladyship in this little cottage.[1] . . .

I can add no more, being interrupted by two matters of great consequence. The first is to plan out of some debris dug out of the rubbish of the Abbey at Melrose, a Gothic

[1] A sketch by C. K. Sharpe.

front to a Well;[1] the other, to buy if possible some acres of ground on a little lake about a mile from my cottage, which is exactly the lake of the Fisherman and Genii.—Meanwhile, believe me, with great respect, dear Lady Louisa, your Ladyship's much honoured and obliged humble servant, WALTER SCOTT.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

ABBOTSFORD, *Oct.* 11*th*, 1812.

MY DEAR MISS BAILLIE,— . . . As for *Rokeby*, I am now working at it in my old Cossack manner, after destroying a whole canto, in which I attempted refinement and elegance. I have revisited the scenery, and fortunately met good weather. My eldest boy and girl went with Mrs. Scott and me, and as we crossed, recrossed, and quartered the border counties, I think they heard border history enough to sicken them of it for their whole lives. My boy, on his little pony, rode about five-and-twenty miles a day with me without being fatigued, and was sometimes relieved by his sister.

I am sorry the *Quarterly Review* has been savage on Mrs. Barbauld,[2] for whose talents I have had long and sincere respect. But I cannot condemn the principle of their criticism, and I imagine Mrs. B. herself will admit that it will be long ere the renown of Lord Wellington is eclipsed by that of General Hull.[3] In fact, I detest

[1] To Hartstonge, Oct. 29th, Scott wrote:—"I have just finished a well, constructed out of a few of the broken stones taken up in clearing the rubbish from Melrose Abbey at removing the modern church. It makes a tolerable deception, and looks at least 300 years old. In honour of an old Melrose Saint I have put an inscription in a Gothic Latin verse written in these characters, AVE, AVE, SANCTE, WALDAVE." The structure may still be seen in the grounds.

[2] A very severe criticism of Mrs Barbauld's poem entitled "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven" appeared in the 14th No. of the *Quarterly*.

[3] An American general whose strategy had not been successful in the invasion of Canada, July 1812.

croaking; if true, it is unpatriotic, and if false, worse. As to my simple self, I am sensible of the value of Mrs. Barbauld's own approbation, but I would, were it in my power, blow up the ruins of Melrose Abbey and burn all the nonsensical rhymes I ever wrote, if I thought either the one or other could survive the honour or independence of my country. My only ambition is to be remembered, if remembered at all, as one who knew and valued national independence, and would maintain it in the present struggle to the last man and the last guinea, though the last guinea were my own property and the last man my own son.[1]

To a more pleasing subject,—our little improvements get on here pretty well. I have a noble spring, which I have enclosed and covered with a Gothic front. . . . It is on the side of a steep bank, and I intend that willows and weeping birches shall droop over it with a background of evergreens. In the bank which stretches along our haugh, I have placed various trees and fringed the whole with shrubs. I have also planted many thousand acorns, which begin to make a great show, the future oaks being nearly as tall as your knitting needle. I wanted to sow birch with them, but found it difficult, or rather impossible to get good seed, which is extraordinary, as this is certainly the country of birches. We are now in the fury of a contested election for Roxburghshire, which will turn on a very narrow majority either way, which must be my apology for not bestowing all my tediousness on you. . . .

[1] In her poem Mrs. Barbauld presaged the decadence of this country and the increase of America in arts, arms, and virtue. In her vision of the future she saw youthful pilgrims,

"From the Blue Mountains or Ontario's Lake,"

crossing the Atlantic to contemplate the sacred ruins of England, as tourists now do those of Greece, London overthrown, deserted, and desolate, but Melrose Abbey preserved from further decay by the genius of Scott!—See *Quarterly Review*, vol. vii. p. 311.

TO SOUTHEY.

EDINR., 26*th Nov.* [1812.]

I HAVE been seldom more mortified than at finding myself this October within 20 miles of you without having it in my power, as the Fates would have it, to turn aside for the purpose of brightening the chain. But I was just set forward on my little tour when the General Election burst upon us like a shot, and as our county was to be fiercely contested, I had only time to spend three days at Rokeby, where for some twenty reasons I would have liked to have stayed a week, and then I hurried over Stainmore as fast as possible to lend my most sweet voice to a losing contest.

I heard at Rokeby of your pilgrimage to the head of the Tees, which seems to have been as desperate a job as my old acquaintance Bruce's to the head of the Nile. I hope you liked Morritt as well as he liked you;[1] he has great kindness and worth, good talent, and I fancy great scholarship; above all he has a sound, healthy, honest English understanding, which I begin to think worth all the talent and learning in the world.

Now let me thank you for the *Omniana*,[2] which I need not say highly amused me. Some trifles I can add: you were right in your original idea that Lord Herbert of Cherbury conceived himself to be odoriferous in person, although Henry More had the same whim. It was probably, I think, rather some perversion of the nose than any peculiar fragrance of the pores. I daresay with a certain degree of early training a man's organ of smelling might distinguish flavours as well as a common cur if he did not reach the accuracy of the pointer. I knew an old lady

[1] For Southey's own impressions of this pleasant visit, see letter to his wife, July 23d, 1812, printed in vol. ii. of *Life and Correspondence.*

[2] Two vols. of the *Omniana* were published in 1812. There were a few articles by Coleridge in it.

who really could smell partridges in the stubble as well as you or I might smell them on the spit. It is a pity she did not take the field, for as she persevered in wearing a small hoop and long ruffles, she would have pointed with admirable effect. Of Baron Munchausen I can tell you something. Some years ago in London I was a little startled at hearing a foreigner ushered under this title into a musical party. As this naturally led to inquiries on my part, I was referred to the gentleman himself, who very good-humouredly told me he was the nephew of the celebrated Baron Munchausen, who was a minister under Frederick of Prussia. It seems the old Baron was a humourist, who after dinner, especially if he happened to have any guests who were likely to be taken in by his marvels, used to amuse himself by inventing or retailing such marvellous adventures as are contained in the volumes which bear his name. He added, his uncle was in other respects a sensible, veracious man, and that his adventures were only told by the way of quizzing or amusing society. A starving German literatus, whose name I have forgot, who knew the Baron and thought he had been neglected by him, compiled the book in revenge, partly from the stories of the Baron, partly from other sources, and partly from his mother wit. It proved a good hit for the bookseller, as the Baron's name and humour was well known, and by degrees made its way into other countries as a book of entertainment. The Baron Munchausen whom I knew was a grave serious sort of a person, a good deal embarrassed by a title which required eternal explanations, and only remarkable for the zeal with which he kept grinding musical glasses the whole evening. I had some other trifles to say, but as I am writing at our table in the Court, the noise of lawyers and wrangling drives them out of my head.—Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

EDINBURGH, *Nov.* 27, 1812.

. . . This will attend about one half of *Rokeby*; the latter part is incorrect, being the proofs before they were corrected, but you will easily be able to allow for their imperfections. I would have sent this packet sooner, but we only came to town a few days since, and I have been very busy since with the Peers' election, and one vile thing or another. Besides, I wanted to send you that part of the story where I was so unlucky as to run my head against your ladyship's, which cost me the re-writing of my Robber's song.[1] When you have amused yourself with all this harum-scarum stuff, will you have the goodness to get a cover from our obliging friend Mr. Freeling, addressed to J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby, Greta Bridge, Yorkshire, who is very curious to know what I have said of his beautiful domain, a curiosity too laudable to remain ungratified. In fact it is really a charming place, uniting in a remarkable degree the romantic character of Scottish scenery, with the rich verdure and huge forest trees that give majesty and richness to that of England, and I wish you knew Morritt and his wife, whom I like extremely, and have therefore the vanity to think you would like them very much also. If I were to be in town in spring, of which I have no hope or expectation at present, and which I should only desire for the pleasure of seeing a friend or two, of whom you stand among the foremost, I would make you acquainted, for one has a selfish pleasure in making one's friends acquainted, as you always hear of them more frequently. I have no leisure to add anything to this

[1] The "Chough and Crow" in *Orra.—Plays on the Passions*, vol. iii.; see Scott's Letters to Miss Baillie, printed in *Lockhart's Life*, vol. iii. pp. 349-355.

scrawl, except my kindest remembrances to Miss A. Baillie, the Dr. and family.

I beg the sheets may remain in your own fireside circle and never go out of your hand. I suffered more by an indiscreet communication than one would think such a trifle could occasion; and believe me, when I say with Captain Bobadil, "by the heart of valour in me, except it be to some peculiar and chosen spirit to whom I am extraordinarily engaged, as to yourself or so, I could not extend thus far."[1] Though time presses I must not omit to thank you for the various civilities with which you have honoured Mr. Terry, who is most deeply sensible of them. —Once more adieu! Walter Scott.

TO THE DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUCH.

Castle St., *Dec.* 1812.

I have the honour to request of your Grace's usual kindness, the acceptance of a copy of *Rokeby*. To any other person some apology would be necessary for heaping quarto upon quarto, but as your Grace was really the original cause of my writing any poetry, beyond the bounds of a Ballad (since the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* was only written to bring in *Gilpin Horner*), I must insist upon my privilege of overwhelming you with the wild tales to which your encouragement has given occasion. I trust your Grace will always believe me, your most respectful and obliged humble servant, Walter Scott.

[1] *Every Man in his Humour*, Act i. sc. 4.

CHAPTER IX

1813

EDINBURGH AND ABBOTSFORD

"Yet once again the magic lyre shall ring,
An exiled prince demands the lofty strain,
And Scotland's falchion drawn to fence her king,
And clans embattled on their native plain;
The Stuart's heir demands his father's reign,
And Highland loyalty, with dauntless truth,
Welcomes the wanderer from the lonely main,
And to her bleeding bosom clasps the youth.
The wandering sprite was heard on lake and hill,
And thrice the bittern shriek'd, and echo clamour'd shrill.'

Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. iii. p. 88.

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1813—AGE 42

Financial embarrassments in publishers' and printers' firms.

Visits Drumlanrig in July, and the north of England in August.

The Laureateship offered by the Regent, and declined.

Address from the City of Edinburgh to the Prince Regent in November.

Bridal of Triermain published anonymously by Ballantyne & Co., Edinburgh, in 12mo.

Songs for the Pitt Anniversary.

Swift's Works in progress, also Life of the Dean.

Waverley recommenced in autumn.

Lord of the Isles commenced.

Memoirs of the Reign of King Charles the First, by Sir Philip Warwick, Kt., in 8vo, published by Ballantyne.

CHAPTER IX.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ABBOTSFORD, *8th January* 1813.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have been a great vagabond during the autumn, and since then have been hard at work at my new poem, which (with official duty since November) has made me a very complete slave. The earliest sheets which can be got together are to be sent to Mr. Arbuthnot, through whose cover I think you will receive them more speedily and safely than by the stage or mail coach. I intended to have sent you my goose in giblets, or in other words, my poem by detached cantos, but I liked it so little in detail I was unwilling the Marquis should see it until it was finished, always in hopes I should be able to mend it as I got on. Accordingly, I think I have finished my bandit Bertram with some spirit, and that the last canto comes off better than I had anticipated. I saw Lord Aberdeen for literally a moment in the midst of the bustle of the Peers' election.[1] . . . I wished he would have stayed a day to look at the painting of Duddingston,[2] etc., but I could not prevail with him. He left Edinburgh that same evening.

You ask me, dear Lady Abercorn, how I like Lord Byron's poem, and I answer, Very much. There is more original strength and force of thinking in it, as well as command of language and versification, than in almost any modern poem of the same length that I have happened to meet with. It is really a powerful poem,—the more

[1] The election at Holyrood of the sixteen Peers to represent Scotland in the House of Lords, as provided for at the Union in 1707.

[2] By Thomson, which the artist intended for Lady Abercorn.

powerful because it arrests the attention without the aid of narrative, and without the least apparent wish to conciliate the favour of the reader, but rather an affectation of the contrary. I say an *affectation* of the contrary, because I should be sorry to think that a young man of Lord Byron's powers should really and unaffectedly entertain and encourage a contempt for all sublunary comforts and enjoyments. That we can be completely happy in this state of things, that is to say, that we can be so placed as neither to feel a void in our hearts or in our imaginations, is altogether inconsistent with our nature, and to mourn therefor is as wise as to regret that we have not wings, or that we lack the lamp of Aladdin, neither of which, by the way, would make us a bit happier if we had them. But any one who enjoys peace and competence, and what I hold equal to either, at least to the latter, the advantage of a well-informed mind, need only look round him to find out by comparison abundant reasons for being thankful for the rank in which Providence has placed him; and the wisest as well as happiest man is he who makes himself as easy in it as he can. This tinge of discontent, or perhaps one may almost say misanthropy, is the only objection I have to Lord B.'s very powerful and original work.

I had a temporary correspondence with Lord B. on rather an odd occasion. The Prince Regent, who now makes *patte de velours* to the *gens des lettres*, desired at some party to be introduced to Ld. B. (who by the way had written a very severe epigram on the *fracas* with Ld. Lauderdale),[1] and said many polite things to him, and what your Ladyship would hardly guess, a great many of your friend. Lord B., knowing the value of a prince's good word, put all these sugar-plums in possession of a person to be sent to me, and I could do no less than thank the donor,

[1] "Weep, daughter of a royal line," etc.—See *Byron*, 8vo, p. 552.

and so I had a civil letter from Childe Harold upon the subject.[1] By the way, there is a report Childe Harold is to be married to an heiress of our northern clime. . . .

I communicated your Ladyship's message to the Duke of Buccleuch, but I have seen very little of him this year, for Bowhill, their seat in our neighbourhood, is to be repaired and enlarged, so they were not there this autumn, and I have been only twice at Dalkeith, being kept very hard at work. I expect to see him on Tuesday, when *Rokeby* is to be christened, on which occasion the printer always gives a little party to a few of my friends, at which the Duke always attends. . . .

I have just escaped to this place for a few days, to look at and direct my little creation. I think it will be prettier than I ventured to hope, but it will take some years. There is a superb spring which I have covered with a little Gothic screen composed of stones which were taken down when the modern church was removed from Melrose Abbey. As I got an ingenious fellow to put my little fragments of columns and carving together, you would really think it was four hundred years old. It is covered with earth all around, above and behind, and my morning's occupation has been planting weeping willows and weeping birches about and above it.[2]

Pray let me know whether there is any hope of your being soon in Scotland, since I certainly must contrive to meet you on the route, as I fear you, or rather the Marquis, will hardly be tempted to visit Duddingston.[3] I should like much to know how he is, and shall be proud if he finds anything to like in *Rokeby*, though I am sure he will scold me for many blunders, and negligences, and very justly.—Your honoured and obliged and grateful,

WALTER SCOTT.

[1] See *Life*, vol. iii. pp. 393-402.

[2] See *ante*, page 261 and note.

[3] Lord Abercorn's mansion near Edinburgh.

Rokeby was begun and finished as it now stands between the 1st of October and 31st December. Think what a push, and excuse my silence. I destroyed some part that was written before.

FROM JOANNA BAILLIE.

HAMPSTEAD, *January 14th*, 1813.

A THOUSAND thanks to you, my dear friend! You are very good, and therefore, as is meet and right, very dear to me.

Your lumbering 4to, as you call it—the noble poem of *Rokeby*, as I call it—came to my hands two days ago, and I have already read it twice. . . . Take my best thanks again for your valuable present before I begin to speak of it, lest I should forget to thank you afterwards. It is a part of my treasure and worldly goods that will do me good all the days of my life. I wish you could have seen me when it arrived. My sister was from home, so I stirred my fire, swept the hearth, chased the cat out of the room, lighted my candles, and began upon it immediately. It is written with wonderful power both as to natural objects and human character; and your magnificent bandit, Bertram, is well entitled to your partiality; for it is a masterly picture, and true to nature in all its parts, according to my conceptions of nature. Your Lady and both her lovers are very pleasing and beautifully drawn; her conduct and behaviour to them both is so natural and delicate; and so is theirs to each other. How many striking passages there are which take a hold of the imagination that can never be unloosed! The burning of the castle in all its progress is very sublime; the final scene also, when Bertram rides into the church, is grand and terrific; the scene between him and Edmund, when he weeps to find that there is any human being that will shed

a tear for him, is very touching and finely imagined. I say nothing of what struck me so much in the 3 first cantos. And besides those higher beauties, there are those of a softer kind that are wonderfully attractive; for instance, the account of the poor Irishman's death, after he had delivered the child to the Lord of Rokeby, which made me weep freely, and the stealing of Edmund back to the cave by night with all the indications of his silent path; the owlet ceasing its cry, the otter leaping into the stream, etc., is delightful. Your images and similes too, with which the work is not overloaded (like a lady with a few jewels, but of the best water), are excellent. Your songs are good, particularly those of Wilfrid; but they have struck me less, somehow or other, than the rest of the poem. As to the invention of your story, I praise that more sparingly, for tho' the leading circumstances are well imagined, the conducting of it seems to me too dramatic for a lyrical narrative, and there are too many complex contrivances to the bringing about the catastrophe.

It seems to me you are hankering after and nearing to the drama prodigiously. Take possession of it then fairly and manfully. You have ample powers, and the favour of the public into the bargain; and if I must be eclipsed in my own demesne, I will take it from your hand rather than from any other.

Send me a better play than any I have to boast of, and if a shade of human infirmity should pass over my mind for a moment, by the setting of the sun I shall love you more than ever. . . .

I must not be so ungrateful as to finish my paper without thanking you, in addition to all my other thanks, for the very handsome notice you take of me in the notes to *Rokeby*. You lose no occasion to stick a sprig in my cap when it offers, and there are no honours which I wear more proudly.

J. B.

TO MORRITT.

9th March 1813.

MY DEAR MORRITT,—Your letter contains admirable news. I wish you would give the raw author of Triermain[1] a hoist to notice, by speaking of him now and then in those parts where a word spoken is sure to have a hundred echoes. I mean your evening parties. . . . I hear Jeffrey has really bestowed great praise on the poem, and means to give it a place in his review. It has not, he says, my great artery, but there is more attention to style, more elegance and ornament, etc. etc. etc. We will see however what he really will say to it in his review, for there is no sure augury from his private conversation. I enclose a copy. . . . It has sold wonderfully here, but has not yet started in London, that we can learn.

This delightful weather will I hope be of service to Mrs. Morritt's health. We had our snowstorm too, and it came in the most undeniable shape in the world. One day, though dreading weather as little as any one, it blew such a tempest of wind and snow that I could not go along Princes Street to get to the Register House, but was fairly blown home again and glad to get into harbour. It is the only day in my life that I ever remember having been fairly turned back by foul weather upon dry land.

I was greatly delighted with the skirmish between the Dramatic Empress and her trusty ally, and the lyrical princess;[2] I must take care to keep out of the way of the latter, whose wrath I have, it seems, incurred by ungallantly neglecting some verses which she sent me many years since, and which I am afraid I postponed acknowledging until acknowledgment would have no longer been

[1] Scott published the little volume of the *Bridal of Triermain* anonymously.

[2] Mr. Morritt had given Scott an amusing account of a misunderstanding between Miss Holford, author of *Wallace*, and Mrs. Siddons.

gracious. However, I am somewhat of Sir Lucius O'Trigger's opinion, that the quarrel is a pretty quarrel as it stands, and hang them that first seek to accommodate it, say I.[1] For aught I know, I am in equal disgrace with the other belligerent power, for the owls of your good city who are subscribing to invite her back to the stage, not content with various indirect applications, which I paid no attention to, at length formally applied to me (the sapient Capel Lofft being their representative), through the medium of no less persons than Messrs. Longman & Co. So I was obliged to open my oracular jaws and give this worthy federation my reasons for not joining them to ask Mrs. Siddons to do an unwise thing. Now, although these were stated with great *retenue*, and with the highest praises on Mrs. Siddons' past and Mrs. Siddons' present, yet I am sensible that even doubts expressed as to Mrs. Siddons' future will not be very agreeable to a palate which has been accustomed to the sugared eloquence of Mrs. Fitzhugh and Lady Milbanke. However, I must hold fast mine integrity, for I would not for the world do her the injury of even seeming to accede to such a foolish proposal, especially as I rather think her printed answer had in it a sort of *nolo episcopari*.

The 8vo *Rokeby* is now published here and almost exhausted, though the Edition was a double one, *i.e.* 6000. They are going to press again. The 4to was overprinted by 500 or 1000, yet the Ballantynes have only about 30 of their share, which was three-fourths of the whole. I have had a most acceptable present from Lady Alvanley, two views, very well done indeed, by Miss Arden, one of Mortham Tower, and one of the Tees and Greta in the park at Rokeby. They are really extremely clever, very like the scenes they represent, and require none of the allowance usually indulged to amateurs. By the way, I have in safe

[1] See Sheridan's *Rivals*.

keeping Mrs. Morritt's drawing of Mortham Tower, and have had it copied. I wish I knew a safe way of forwarding the original.

I hope they do not mean seriously to send the Duke of Cumberland to Hanover. Surely we have made enough of such experiments. Charlotte sends kind love to Mrs. Morritt, and I am ever, most truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO THE DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUCH.

EDINBURGH, 22*d March* 1813.

MADAM,—I never apologise for intruding upon your Grace when I can recommend to you an act of kindness or of charity, for I am always sure that the cause would advocate itself even if introduced by a stranger, and I think your Grace would scold me if I did not think that in such a case as the enclosed,[1] I have as the only minstrel of the Clan, a sort of privilege to be a beggar. I believe there is now no remnant of the Household Poet except the Laureate and the Highland pipers. Of the rights of the former I know nothing, but if I may regulate myself on those of the Piper, who is always the most important as well as the most noisy attendant of the Chieftain, I will be quite warranted in begging a guinea from your Grace and another from the Duke to save a brother minstrel from very short commons. I do not warrant that the poetry will be good, as the poor man has not been lately in a way to improve his talents, which were originally far from despicable. But what your Grace may miss in amusement you will, I am sure, account more than compensated in bounty to a poor man who I fear needs it much. If Lord Montagu has not forgot me he will give me a guinea also. I hope the Duke and Lord Whichester,[2] the gallant Lord

[1] Referring to the *Queen's Wake*, by the Ettrick Shepherd.

[2] Afterwards Walter Francis, fifth Duke of Buccleuch.

John and all the young Ladies are well, especially my little god-daughter; I have got a little keepsake for her, but I will claim a dinner at Dalkeith or Bowhill on her birth-day before I produce it. It is a very ancient and simple brooch, which I think may have one day fixed the mantle of a British princess.—Your Grace will always believe me your most respectful and very faithful humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ABBOTSFORD, 23*d March* 1813.

YOU have a great right, my dear friend, to upbraid my ungracious silence, and yet heaven knows the five fingers of my right hand have had so much to do for six months past that I believe they have sometimes wished for the cramp as a relief from the pen. If you will recollect, my dear Lady Abercorn, that *Rokeby* was written as fast as my hand could write it, that moreover I have *Swift* to bring out before the Birthday, that our official duty, though formal, and easily discharged, is still duty which occupies two or three hours each day during the terms of the court, that I had the burden of constant attention to the police of the little county of which I am Sheriff, where certain agitators of Luddism had begun to be busy, above all that I had Abbotsford to convert from a bare bank and meadow into a human place of habitation, I think you will pardon my eyes for turning very heavy when the various labours of the day were over, and when I was most disposed to send remembrances to a friend whom I have so many reasons to esteem and to love. I have been here for some days directing the important operations of the spring, and particularly the stocking of a garden, which I trust will be a tolerable one for ordinary wall fruit if the easterly hazes which infest the Tweed in the season of

flourish will permit. Forest trees flourish with me at a great rate, and of my whole possession of 120 acres I have reduced about 70 to woodland, both upon principles of taste and economy. I have been studying Price[1] with all my eyes, and not without hopes of converting an old gravel-pit into a bower, and an exhausted quarry into a bathing-house. So you see, my dear Madam, how deeply I am bit with the madness of the picturesque, and if your Ladyship hears that I have caught a rheumatic fever in the gravel-pit, or have been drowned in the quarry, I trust you will give me credit for dying a martyr to taste. I trust to find the Kembles still in Edinburgh. J. K. is, I think, greater than himself, and that is twenty times greater than any actor I ever saw. I attended him most faithfully until we left Edinburgh, and to my very great amusement indeed. He is a very magnificent study for any one who is fond of dramatic representation. I will take care of your Ladyship's commission, and will add to any new books the Kembles may be able to find, two or three little volumes. The first and most interesting is a spirited imitation of *my manner* called the *Bridal of Triermain*. The author is unknown, but it makes some noise among us. The other is a little novel, rather too much of the marvellous cast for my taste, but written with some spirit and interest. Perhaps I may find something else before my packet goes off, especially an 8vo *Rokeby*, which must be ready by the time I get to town. I am quite proud of the Marquis's approbation: you know how very highly I hold his Lordship's taste.

I was very well diverted indeed with the *Rejected Addresses*, but I really did not think it necessary to express my satisfaction to the Messrs. Smith, the authors. I would certainly have done so had I had a handsome opportunity, but the gentlemen are perfect strangers to

[1] Sir Uvedale Price's *Treatise on the Picturesque.*

me, and to intrude a compliment upon them might have looked like deprecating their satire, a point on which my feelings are perfectly invulnerable.

The poor Princess of Wales—surely her fate has been a hard one, and no less so to have fallen into the hands of her present advisers, whose only object in making these scandalous anecdotes public is to disgrace the royal family in the eyes of the public. After all, the whole affair reminds me irresistibly of a hand at Commerce. The present ministers, while out of office, held the Princess in their hand, —a court card to be sure, but of no great value. They have the luck to take up the Prince, cast by the blunder of their opponents, and they discard the Princess as a matter of course, while the Outs, equally as a matter of course, take her up, and place her in their hand as being a kind of *pis aller*. And thus goes the strange game at politics.[1]

I have had it intimated to me through the Prince's Librarian that his Royal Highness desires his library to be open to me when I come to town, and wishes me to be presented, with many other words of great praise and civility. I should soon lose my sunshine, I fancy, were I to go to Kensington, which I certainly would do if I were asked, having no idea that the Princess's adversity cancels my obligations to her for so much attention as I have received. And so four hundred miles' distance has its advantages.

Miller[2] has given up business and my present publishers are my old friends and school-fellows the Ballantynes of Edinburgh. To publish for myself might be more lucrative, but from the connections I have with them I really get as much by *Rokeby* as I ought in reason to expect, and more than was ever given for any poem of the length, —3000 guineas. Yet the first edition has paid them, and

[1] The new administration after Perceval's death, under Lord Liverpool, was supported by the Regent; the opposition then took up the cause of the ill-used wife of George IV.

[2] Wm. Miller, publisher, Albemarle Street, who had just sold his business to Mr. John Murray.

the second will be clear profit to the publishers. I will write a few lines by the Kembles, whom I hope to see before their departure.

TO MISS SMITH.

EDINR., *5th April* 1813.

MY DEAR MISS SMITH,— . . . I have been much teazed lately with applications to join the subscription for the recall of Mrs. Siddons, and have at length, with great reluctance, for undoubtedly it was a delicate subject, been obliged to give my reasons for declining. In fact she will do a great injustice to herself if she suffers herself to be lured back to a situation of such labour, when her constitution has obviously suffered so much. I wonder if these ladies and gentlemen have subscribed to make her immortal and unattackable by age or by decay, for I think that is the only thing that can render their proposal reasonable. The parting was made just at the time it should have been, retaining enough of her astonishing powers to command our admiration, while the unavoidable decay of strength and constitution reconciled the public to losing her. I hope she will not be cajoled into returning, for she can never repeat the same impressive parting, or receive from the public such testimonies of regret and esteem. These things happen but once, and more last words are always dangerous.[1]

We have had John Kemble here for some weeks, who is now doubtless by far our first artist among the actors.

[1] Mrs. Siddons retired from the London stage on June 30th, 1812, at Covent Garden, where she acted Lady Macbeth with so much power that at the conclusion of the sleep scene the audience could not bear to look on any of the other actors, though John Kemble was there; he led his sister to the front of the stage, where she delivered with great emotion her parting words, ending with—

"And breathes with swelling heart her long, her last farewell."

The audience took leave of their favourite with great acclamations, and at once left the house, without waiting for the conclusion of the play.

He has been fashionable, and has drawn great houses, much to the advantage of the Harry Siddons, whose house was not much frequented in the beginning of the season. Mr. Pinkerton the historian has had a tragedy here, but it was not successful. The interest was of a disagreeable kind, and the scenes not connected so artfully as to produce dramatic effect; otherwise, the poetry has, I think, considerable merit.[1] We have not yet seen Coleridge's play,[2] but are to have it on Saturday for Terry's benefit. I doubt it will make no great impression; for, excepting Terry and Mrs. H. Siddons, we are heinously unprovided for any tragic effort. . . . Adieu, my dear Miss Smith, and believe me, ever your sincere friend, WALTER SCOTT.

FROM LADY LOUISA STUART.

BOTHWELL CASTLE, 22*nd April* 1813.

DEAR MR. SCOTT,—I shall make you no apology for my long silence, or for owning that I did not attempt to read *Rokeby* till about a fortnight ago, my mind having been thoroughly untuned to pleasure, and needle-work my chief resource and occupation. No more of what does not concern you. Let me now say how glad I am to see a third edition already printed, a proof its popularity equals that of its predecessors. When I come to my full relish for poetry, I believe it will be as great a favourite with me; the characters, always your forte, are full as masterly, and Wilfrid's in a manner new, because the milder virtues in a man never were made quite interesting before.

Rowe's Altamont[3] is insipid; your friend Miss Baillie gives us the female character, not the male, in her gentler heroes; even in novels they commonly only serve as foils to more impetuous spirits. But Wilfrid is almost the first

[1] There were two anonymous historical plays put on the Edinburgh stage at this time—*Caledonia* on Dec. 23, 1812, and *The Heiress of Strathern* on March 24.—Dibdin's *Annals*.

[2] *Remorse*, acted in Edinburgh in April 1813.

[3] *Fair Penitent*.

object of the reader, attracts one's pity and affection, and never one's contempt. Bertram as an individual is also very original; tho' of the same species as Roderick Dhu and William of Deloraine, perfectly distinct from them, himself alone in every word and action. I was forcibly struck with the parting scene between him and Edmund in the cave, his depression rendered so pathetic, and the sublime simile of the tropic sun. His *finale* on entering the church highly satisfies me. The songs are almost all charming; that to the moon, the bandit's ballad and chorus, and the cypress wreath especially.

I could say much more, but must speak of the *Bridal of Triermain*, and as a faithful spy, will give you a strict account of all I have heard, good and bad. Lady Douglas read it aloud to Lady H. Ancrum, the young ladies, and me; the Scotts were gone. It produced exclamations of surprise and delight, and was all approved, excepting one part, the ridicule on Lucy's lovers etc., from page 103 to 109 inclusive.

You are the only author I ever yet knew to whom one might speak plain about the faults found with his works; *if this were yours*, I could fairly own the disapprobation of that part was very decided. I ventured to say the poem seemed meant as an imitation of your style, and you sometimes had careless lines. "No," replied Lady D. indignantly, "but Walter Scott *never* wrote anything in such bad taste as this; it is quite unlike *him*, and I cannot understand how it could come from a person capable of writing the remainder, which really is beautiful."

On Lord Newbattle's arriving from Edinburgh the other day very full of it, and saying a Mr. Gillies was its author, she begged him, if he knew Mr. Gillies, to persuade him to strike out that passage. The Glasgow bookseller also gives it to Mr. Gillies,[1] so we are quite satisfied. . . .

[1] Mr. Robert P. Gillies.—See *Journal, passim.*

I think you will enjoy an odd incident that occurred yesterday. In the change for a draft Lady D. found a Paisley guinea note, pretty dirty and greasy, on the back of which was a blotting that by chance she observed to look like verse. With much pains I deciphered these lines—

> "Farewell my note ! and wheresoe'er ye wend
> Shun gaudy scenes to be the poor man's friend.
> Ye 've left a poor one, go to one as poor,
> And drive despair and hunger from his door."

She vows to keep it sacredly for some object of charity. I am charged with her kindest remembrance, and beg you will give mine to Mrs. Scott.—Believe me, ever your much obliged,

L. STUART.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

22*nd April* 1813.

MANY thanks, my dearest friend, for your kind attention about the verses. They are very clever indeed, and had it not been that my friend Lydia White lies rather open to be practised upon, I should never have suspected them, though in the circumstances I deemed further inquiry due for the sake of the public.[1] It was very handsome of the author to put me on my guard, and I beg you will express how kindly I take it of him. I understood from Miss White's second letter that I could get no feasible account of the authenticity of the verses, and our friend Lady Melville when in Ireland had heard of the quiz and wrote to me about it. I put the lines into the *Register*, by way of contributing to a work which I think very well of. . . .

The *Bridal of Triermain* is the book which has excited most interest here. Jeffrey lauds it highly, I am informed, and is one day to throw it at my head. I have

[1] Modern verses which had been sent to Scott as an original poem by Swift.

added a little book called *Poetical Epistles*,[1] or some such name, only for the sake of the first two pieces, or rather of two or three paragraphs of them, or rather for two lines applying exactly to a view from Abbotsford—

> "Soft slept the mist on cloven Eildon laid,
> And distant Melrose peep'd from leafy shade."

The attempt to render Theocritus into broad vulgar Scotch is totally unsuccessful. I also add *Horace in London*, by the authors of the *Rejected Addresses*, but which does not add to their fame. In the first place, many of the topics they have touched are gone by, for who now thinks of Mrs. Clarke or Duke and Darling? But besides, the public will

[1] The *Poetical Epistles* were written by the Rev. Robert Morehead, afterwards Dean of Edinburgh and subsequently Rector of Easington, Yorkshire. I am indebted to the courtesy of the author's granddaughter for permitting me to use the following letter addressed "To the [anonymous] author of *Epistles from Scotland* and Translations, etc., care of Messrs. Ramsay and Co., Printers, Edinburgh."

EDINR., 1*st June* 1815.

I should not, sir, have suffered your card to remain [so] long unanswered if I had thought that I could offer you any criticisms upon your interesting poems. But I am not a great friend either to giving or receiving advice of this nature. A friendly critic may no doubt sometimes be of service to an author, but I think very rarely.

It once happened to me, when less hackneyed in composition, to shew a small poem to about a dozen persons, whom I consulted as having taste and judgment. They all honoured my attempt with general approbation, but favoured me at the same time with so many special objections that not a line of the poem escaped unblotted, excepting two, which were neither good nor bad, but essentially necessary to carry on the story. As my good friends, however, did not in general agree upon their objections, I took the liberty of departing from them all; and from that time I have never sought or given any criticism except from two persons, whose minds are very much in the same cast of feeling with my own.

I trust, sir, that you will hold this as an apology for my declining to offer any particular remarks on a poem to which I can so safely and conscientiously give my sincere approbation.

There is one couplet in your *Epistle* which I suppose I have quoted a hundred times, as it describes exactly the distant view of Eildon and Melrose from the upper part of my little farm. I meant to have said all this a long while since, but have been prevented by a variety of trifling business.

I wish you, sir, all health to follow your literary amusements, and should be happy at any time to shew myself your obliged servant, WALTER SCOTT.

not bear too much jocularity from one quarter; fun upon fun is apt to grow a little tiresome. Accordingly, *Horace in London* has been coldly received, and the authors who were, as lions of the first order, received into the fashionable menageries last season, are no longer in the same request. So at least says the echo we hear of London tattle. I desired the Ballantynes to add three thick volumes of Eastern Tales, the most complete collection of the kind ever published, which I delight in most extremely. I fear you will find the print, though beautiful for the size, too small for your eyes; but they are an excellent stock-book for the saloon. A volume of popular romances belong to the set, on a plan which will be continued if the public like them. To all these I have added what are worth all the rest, Crabbe's new Tales, strongly marked with his manner, diction, and style of thinking; but very interesting from the deep insight which they afford into human character. It is scarcely possible to look at his portraits without recognising them as painted from nature, though one may never have met with the originals whom they resemble. Any of these books which your ladyship may not like on perusal may be returned, if you think proper, and any order to my friendly publishers I always consider as an obligation on myself.

I have an old copy of the history of the Highwaymen. It is ill-written and ill-selected, yet curious. What a book might be made out of the *causes célèbres* of England, collected upon a principle similar to that adopted by the French editors of that popular work. The criminal records of Scotland would be still more extraordinary; for, joined to the peculiarity of manners, the custom or rule of taking down the whole evidence in writing, which prevailed till within these thirty years, afforded complete materials for such a selection, which, by the way, I have often thought of.

I am now far advanced with *Swift*. When my task is

over I intend to arrange for publication a very complete collection of songs and poetry respecting the insurrections —for I will not call them rebellions—of 1715 and 1745, for the purpose of making a supplement to the *Border Minstrelsy*, and bringing down the ballad history of Scotland to the middle of the eighteenth century.

You may depend on our meeting at Dumfries in August, and I will go on a day's journey with you if I do not increase the difficulty of your accommodation, which with so large a suite must necessarily be considered.—Adieu, my dearest friend, God bless you, W. S.

There is at Dublin a man of great but eccentric genius named Maturin.[1] His father held an office of emolument in the post-office, but from circumstances of inaccuracy, which however was not held to affect character, lost his situation, and was thrown from opulence to indigence. The son, in whom I am interested merely from his high talent, was a clergyman in the diocese of the Bishop of Meath, who tells me that he behaved remarkably well, but held tenets too Calvinistic for the church, and which were likely to prevent his progress. He is now settled in Dublin, and keeps, I understand, a boarding-house for young gentlemen studying at Trinity College. He is an excellent classical scholar, and a man of general information on all subjects, with the power of expressing himself powerfully either in verse or prose. Two of his novels fell into my hands, and struck me much as evincing a strong, though very wild and sombre imagination, and great powers of expression. His powers of language indeed sometimes outrun his ideas, like the man who was run away with by his own legs. I think this man really deserv-

[1] Charles Robert Maturin, one of the many unfortunate men of genius whom Scott endeavoured to serve by advice and pecuniary assistance. His drama *Bertram* was successfully introduced at Drury Lane in 1816 by Kean. The original MS. with Maturin's letters to Scott, is still preserved at Abbotsford.

ing of patronage from his talents, and capable of serving the Duke of Richmond's administration by his pen, should it be thought worth while to inquire after him. At present he seems to be in the way of adding another example to the long roll of unfortunate men of talents Ireland has produced. If your ladyship can turn the eye of any great person upon him who may be willing to patronise, I cannot, from the account I hear of Mr. Maturin from the Bishop of Meath, suppose it will be ill bestowed.

TO HIS DAUGHTER.

ABBOTSFORD, 3d *May* (*very like* 3*d March in Temperature*) [1813].

MY DEAR SOPHIA,—I received your letter in which you say nothing of Walter's schooling. I hope that goes on well. I am sorry to say the poor Cuddy is no more. He lost the use of his hind legs, so we were obliged to have him shot, out of humanity. This will vex little Anne, but as the animal could never have been of the least use to her, she has the less reason to regret his untimely death; and I will study to give her something that she will like as well, to make amends, namely, a most beautiful peacock and pea-hen, so tame that they come to the porch and feed out of the children's hands. They were a present from Mertoun, and I will give them to little Anne to make amends for this family loss of the Donkey. I have got a valuable addition to the Museum, some of the hair of Charles I. cut from the head when his coffin was discovered about a month ago in St. George's Chapel at Windsor. Dr. Baillie begged it for me of Sir Henry Halford, under whose inspection the coffin was opened. The hair is a light brown. This is my best news. The worst is that everything is suffering from cold and drought. Give my kind love to Walter, Anne, and little Charles. I assure you the gardens are well looked after, but we want a little rain sadly. The Russians have taken Dantzick and you

have escaped reading some very cramp gazettes, consequently a good deal of yawning. Mama joins in kind compliments to Miss Miller, and I am always, your affectionate papa, WALTER SCOTT.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

[1813.]

YOU may conceive, my dear friend, the surprise and pleasure with which I received the precious relique your letter enclosed. I say *you* may imagine it, because your fancy can comprehend everything, but I will not allow that any one else can comprehend the matter in the slightest degree. I have had a thousand different fancies about the proper mode of enchasing and preserving it without being able to satisfy myself, but more of this when I can acquaint you with the result.[1] My pleasure was the greater at being possessed of this inestimable relique of distressed majesty, because I had been interesting myself deeply about the discovery of Charles's grave without the least hope of being so far a partaker in its spoils. Perhaps it will interest Sir Henry Halford to know that the reports to which Clarendon alludes, as unfavourable to the statesmen of the time, were founded on the following circumstances. Oliver Cromwell was buried with great splendour, and it was the hope and expectation of the Royalists that rites equally sumptuous or more should have been rendered to the body of Charles I.[2] Accordingly it has been affirmed that a sum was actually appropriated for that purpose, and that as Charles II. employ'd it upon his pleasures, he was fain to shelter himself under the economical subterfuge that his father's grave could not be discovered, a matter highly improbable, let Lord Clarendon say what he will, and indeed as appears from

[1] For description of the Gold Ring enclosing King Charles's hair with the word "Remember" surrounding it, see *Life*, vol. iv. p. 141.

[2] *Rebellion*, vol. vi. pp. 243-45. Lond. 1826.

his own narrative and that of Herbert, as well as from the late remarkable discovery, by no means accurately consistent with truth.

I did not think Charles's hair had been quite so light; that of his father, and I believe of all the Stuarts till Charles II., was reddish. My friend James Skene of Rubislaw inherited from his mother, a descendant of Bishop Juxon, the Bible which Charles gave on the scaffold to the prelate, with the emphatic and enigmatical word *Remember*, to which no good clue has ever been found.

I wish Dr. Baillie had been at Windsor. I should have liked to have known how the Regent looked upon this solemn occasion, for the incident was a trying one. Tory as I am, my heart only goes with King Charles in his struggles and distresses, for the fore part of his reign was a series of misconduct; however, if he sow'd the wind, God knows he reap'd the whirlwind, and so did those who first drew the sword against him, few of whom had occasion to congratulate the country or themselves upon the issue of these disastrous wars. Sound, therefore, be the sleep, and henceforward undisturbed the ashes, of this unhappy prince. In his private capacity he was a man of unimpeach'd virtue, worth, and honour, and bore his misfortune with the spirit of a prince and the patience of a Christian. His attachment to a particular form of worship was in him conscience, for he adhered to the Church of England during his treaty in the Isle of Wight and afterwards, when by giving up that favourite point he might have secured his re-establishment; and in that sense he may be justly consider'd as a martyr, though his early political errors blemish his character as King of England. My great-great-grandfather by the mother's side, John Swinton of Swinton, narrowly escaped being among the commissioners who tried him, being an especial friend and councillor of old Noll (the more shame for him). He

was one of the principal managers for Scotland during the interregnum; and upon the Restoration, finding himself in great danger of sharing the fate of Argyle, he chose to assume the faith and manners of a Quaker, on which occasion it was observed if he had not *trembled* he would not have *quaked*. A grand-aunt of mine used to tell me her father's astonishment, who went to bed a fashionable young gentleman, laying aside one of the rich laced suits of the time, and upon awaking found a compleat suit of Simon Pure habiliments laid down in the stead of his fine clothes; but it saved his father's neck and estate, the court satisfying themselves with some gruesome fines, which the family feel the effects of to this day. Some other relations got clapper-claw'd on the other side, losing both land and life for the Stuarts, so that I heard enough of the Civil Wars on both sides of the question. I must not conclude these desultory anecdotes without my kindest remembrances and thanks to Dr. Baillie, through whose intercession I have been so much honoured. I think, with the sword of Montrose, and this lock of the unfortunate Charles, I am fairly set up as a Cavalier, and it would be scarce possible for me to be anything else were I disposed.

I really grieve for this juncture of affairs, but it will blow by if the Regent has prudence. The minister would deserve well of his country who would advise him to extend to his wife the *protection* of a husband, and *then* with a good grace exert the *authority* of one. I think, and have some reason for thinking, that had Perceval lived he would have attempted to place them on a less scandalous footing. . . .

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINR., 21*st May* [1813].

MY DEAREST FRIEND, — Your letter (always most welcome) was doubly so as it promises the pleasure of

seeing you so soon. Any day after the 12th July you may rely on my meeting you at Longtown, and proceeding a day or two with you in any direction. I presume you go over Stainmore, in which [case] Mrs. Scott and I will probably go as far as Greta-bridge, to visit my friends the Morritts at Rokeby. My cortege will in that case be rather patriarchal, as I shall probably have my boy and girl with me; but this will be no great inconvenience, as they can get beds in the town at Longtown, and at Penrith (which I fancy will be your next day's journey) there is a very large inn. You travel, I presume, with your own cavalry as usual. Should you keep the west road by Kendal, I will go so far as that town, and so to Keswick and see Southey. Till the 12th July I am necessarily detained by attendance on the court here; for although we can play truant sometimes, the ill-health of the wife of one of my colleagues has carried him to Harrowgate this season, and there cannot above one of us be absent at a time without the risk of stopping the business of the court.

I like Lord Abercorn's plan of all things in the world. It is a sort of *muddling* work which would amuse me very much, and I am convinced I could divest the cases so much of technicality that it would form a most entertaining book. Of course, it would only comprehend Scottish causes, for knowing nothing of English law, I would make a foolish figure on that ground. There is one great objection, however, to this undertaking, and that is, that the collection would hardly be complete without the Douglas cause. But this revival would be accompanied with unpleasant feelings to the present family, with whom I have always lived on particular intimacy. Indeed, I do not anywhere know so clever and pleasant a companion as Lady D.,[1] and you know besides she is an aunt of the Duke of Buccleuch,

[1] Frances, Lady Douglas.

and her daughter is married on an uncle of my neighbour and kinsman, Scott of Gala; so I would do nothing to displease, or rather to hurt their feelings for the universe. If the Marquis thinks this chapter can be skipt over, I will be most anxious to set my researches on foot. The half barbarous state of Scotland until 1748 gave rise to deeds and incidents of the most wild, mysterious, and original character, and even in my own time I have known professionally some cases of a most singular description. I am half tempted to abridge the circumstances of one which occurred during the last sitting of our courts, and is still in dependence.

About the middle of the last century a Scotch gentleman of landed property, by name Carruthers of Dormont, married an aunt of the late Duchess of Gordon. The ladies of this family were not famed for circumspection, and this dame went astray. The husband obtained a sentence of divorce against her; but before the proceedings could be finished she was delivered of a daughter, which law fixed upon Dormont as a legitimate child, heir to his estate by former settlements, although he had every possible reason to believe that the infant was an alien to his blood. He refused to see the child, and as he was obliged to maintain it, he resolved it should be in such a manner that the girl when she grew up, should never either know her rights, or have an opportunity of vindicating them. She was shifted from one obscure place of concealment to another (removals which afterwards could only be traced by the affection of her nurse, who had traced the poor infant through all the places of abode out of pure affection), and at length, when about five years old, she was sent to reside with an ignorant and low farmer amid the wildest part of the Cheviot Hills, with positive instructions that the girl should receive no other education than should enable her to read the Bible, and that she should be bred in the

most humble manner. Still however, dressed and educated as a peasant wench, the girl showed some spirit and sense above her fortune. She spurned (one of the witnesses says) at the name of Robson which they endeavoured to fix upon her, and as her guardian was talkative in his cups (a predicament in which, like most Cheviot farmers, he was frequently placed), she learned by degrees more of the mystery of her birth than Dormont designed she should ever know. Being a pretty girl she did not want admirers; nay, as she disdained all of utterly low degree, the son of a neighbouring petty squire called Routledge ran away with and married her. His father's estate was very small, and burthened with debt. The young couple were not economists, and distresses came thick upon them. They had recourse to her legal father, as he may be called, and stated their claims to a share of his estate while alive, and to inherit it at his death, but being miserably embarrassed were at length glad to sell their rights for about £1200, which was received and spent. Calamity came still more heavy. At length the husband died a prisoner in Carlisle jail, the wife, who had been the victim of ill fortune from her birth, soon followed him to the grave, and a boy and girl who survived became the objects of the charity of a distant relation. The boy (who was so young when his mother died as to have no knowledge whatever of the peculiar circumstances under which he was born) was fitted out for the East Indies. Before he went on board, his benefactor put into his hands a packet, and desired him to take charge of it. It referred, he said, to some claims of his mother on a Scotch estate, and might one day be useful to him should he return from India an independent man. The youth left the papers with some others in the hands of a friend in London, and went to follow his fortune. It seemed that the ill planet which haunted his mother had exhausted its

influence, for Henry Routledge was prosperous, and obtained an honourable situation in the Company's service; and in process of time obtained leave to return to Britain. He visited Cumberland, his native county, and was induced, from the love of grouse-shooting, to extend his tour to Dumfriesshire. An extraordinary chance led him to chuse his residence at a petty inn, near the very estate of Dormont, now possessed by a grand-nephew of the old laird. The name of the stranger (after he had been a guest for a day or two) struck the landlady, who, like most of her class, was a sort of record of the ancient and modern gossip of the parish, where it may be thought so odd a history as that of Routledge's mother was well known, for her claim had been made public at the time when old Dormont compounded with her and her husband. This chattering old dame did not fail to engage Mr. Routledge in discourse about his family history, of which she found with great surprise he was totally ignorant. The lights she gave him on his mother's melancholy history recalled to his recollection the packet given him by his benefactor, who was now dead. When he returned to London he caused the papers it contained to be laid before English Counsel, who of course could only advise him to consult lawyers here. He left directions to do so, and to commence law proceedings if necessary. The late President Blair (then Solicitor-General for Scotland) advised a lawsuit, on the ground that Mrs. Routledge and her husband, in compounding their own right, could not transact away that of their son. When Mr. Routledge returned a second time from India, he was greeted with the joyful intelligence that the first decision of the cause was favourable. He gave a dinner to some of his friends, and to his counsel, and—I am sorry to add the catastrophe—was found dead in his bed next morning, having broken a blood-vessel during the

night. So ended this strange eventful history, but so ended not the lawsuit, which is still maintained against the Carruthers in possession, in the right of the deceased Routledge's sister, Mrs. Majendie, wife of the Bishop of Bristol (as I think).[1]

My *cause célèbre* has occupied so much room that I have none to enlarge upon the present marriage-law of England and Scotland. Being quite opposite to each other, the one acknowledging as legal a marriage which the other annuls, it clearly follows that a man may have a lawful wife in each country at one and the same time, and also a lawful family by each wife, and this with perfect impunity, because, as neither country will acknowledge the marriage made in the other as existing, a trial for bigamy is out of the question. It is a comfortable circumstance in such an arrangement, that the two wives, if they wish to retain their credit, must live in different countries, for she who crosses the Tweed loses her character.—It would require much more room than I have left to say how much I am your Ladyship's most obliged and faithful humble servant, W. S.

TO MORRITT.

EDINR., 25*th June* 1813.

MY DEAR MORRITT,—I fear our match has missed fire, and *Triermain* will not be reviewed; but what the reason

[1] The decision favourable to Mr. Routledge was given in February 1811, but the ultimate decision of the case was unfavourable. Upon Mr. Routledge's death, his sister, Mrs. Majendie, wife of the Bishop of Bangor (not Bristol) took his place as pursuer of the action; and in May 1812 the First Division of the Court of Session by a majority of 4 to 3 held that the compromise of 1759, by which Mr. and Mrs. Routledge accepted £650 (not £1200) from Mr. Carruthers in full satisfaction of their claims, was binding upon their heirs. This judgment was affirmed by the House of Lords in 1820, after a reference to the Court of Session for the opinion of the whole judges. See Reports in *Faculty Collection*: also 4 *Dow* 392, and 2 *Bligh* 692.

may be for this alteration I cannot learn without making inquiries, which would not be prudent. It is said that Jeffrey, the scourge of authors, is about to pay a visit to America almost immediately. The reason of this *move* is variously assigned; but the public, always willing to put the worst construction upon such matters, spread a whisper about a claim made upon his unwilling hand by some fair nymph whose pretensions he is willing to parry. This however I don't believe a word of, and cannot see what good changing his climate would do him in the case supposed. He has some connections in America, and I fancy is willing to take the opportunity of the long vacation to refresh himself in the congenial atmosphere of a republic.

By the way, I got a present from an American gentleman of a most admirable brace of volumes, entitled *The History of New York during the Dutch Dynasty*, by Diedrich Knickerbocker. It is an excellent and very humorous satire, much of it doubtless lost by its being local, but enough remaining [to] entertain me highly.[1] I will bring it to you if you are to be at Rokeby in the beginning of August; for you must know that for the purpose of settling some business, I am to meet the Marquis of Abercorn on the border in the commencement of that month, and I must travel on a day's journey, or perhaps two, in his suite. This will bring me to the foot of Stainmore, and it would be difficult to turn me there if I thought Mrs. Morritt and you were on the other side. I should like to know how this will suit with your motions.

In consequence of the success of *Rokeby* and some other favourable circumstances, I am now busied with clearing off all old scores and scraping together my little property

[1] Mr. Harry Brevoort, a friend of Washington Irving, sent the book to Scott, who wrote in reply (April 23rd) the appreciative letter printed in Irving's *Life*, vol. i. p. 197.

for the benefit of the brats, and by Christmas I have every reason to hope that I shall find myself a free man of the forest, with some thousand pounds in my pocket, besides my house and the farm of Abbotsford. But in these cursed times I cannot as formerly get cash for my bookseller's bills. . . . This will certainly be my last transaction of the kind: for should I write again, I will rather keep the copyright than subject myself to these inconveniences. Indeed I was partly aware it would have been better to do so with *Rokeby*, but I wished to buy Abbotsford and settle myself on the Tweed, without which I think I could hardly have been quite happy anywhere. . . . Above all let me know if I shall find you at Rokeby when I part with the great Marquis. I should tell you how well the wild flowers from Thorsgill are flourishing at Abbotsford, how the currant bushes (wild videlicet) are sprouting out on the Abbotswell, all which I hope Mrs. Morritt and you will come to see one day or other. Begging my kind compts., with all apology for a scrawl written to the tune of a pleading which goes very deeply to injure the character of Ossian Macpherson,—Ever yours truly,

W. Scott.

FROM MORRITT.

Rokeby 29*th June* [1813].

. . . I feared for the success of your scheme of *Triermain* from all I heard in London. There was a strong suspicion of the author, and some of those who knew you best were not to be deceived. W. Rose exclaimed directly: "*Aut Erasmi est aut Diaboli*," and many others swore it was yours. I told more lies about it than an Old Bailey Evidence, and only hope you are prepared to answer for my sins, and won't leave me to be punished for serving your cause, so long as dried pease are to be found, by which you can walk occasional penances *pro salute animæ meæ*.

But tho' the suspicion will prevent the review of the *Bridal of Triermain,* whence arises this ominous silence about Rokeby? I was told Jeffrey had prepared that article for the last review, and then struck it out, and delayed the volume till another was written to fill its place. Tell me what you know of this manœuvre. . . .

I have to thank you for Joanna Baillie. I dined in company with her at Lady Milbanke's, introduced myself in your name, was graciously received, and we "swore an eternal friendship,"[1] a vow I mean to keep. She is a delightful person, and I hope she thinks me the same. Besides, her unaffected and unassuming genius was made more piquant in my eyes by the Rev. Dr. Parr and Lord Erskine, who were of the same dinner, and who each puffed the other in alternate compliments, which were mutually accepted and carried to account, till it was almost impossible to refrain from laughing at a scene fully equal to one of Foote's best farces. You shall have the particulars in August, and judge of the treat we had. Vanity in all its various modifications was never so brilliantly displayed, and after all there is nothing so entertaining.

Lord Byron has written a new poem, and in compliment, I suppose, to Rogers' Epic, has published it as a fragment, and dedicated it to him. I hope the joke will not become universal, for it is very conceited, and spoils, moreover, a good poem. He calls it the *Giaour,* a word that has sadly plagued the *bas-bleu,* for they cannot talk about it till we Turks have instructed them in the true pronunciation. He has paid you an involuntary tribute, for in many of his passages he has copied your manner; but he seems fated to compliment and to cultivate every man in turn whom his earlier productions abused. The story, where it is told at all, is powerfully and spiritedly done. . . .

[1] See Canning's *Rovers.*

FROM JOANNA BAILLIE.

EYLAND, HONITON, *July* 1*st*, 1813.

MY DEAR FRIEND,— . . . I have met with your friend Mr. Morritt, and begun, I hope, an acquaintance with him; for I should be sorry to think that what is past is all I shall ever have of his society. I had the good luck to find myself seated next to him at dinner at Sir R. Milbanke's, tho' we had not been introduced to each other, and had the luck also, while I was struggling with my own foolish reserve for something to say to him, to be spoken to by him first. This made all easy. We talked about you and *Rokeby* and some other agreeable subjects, and I found myself so much placed to my heart's content, that all the wit and learning of Dr. Parr, who sat smoking his pipe in great glory at the other end of the long table, was entirely lost to me without regret. . . .

This, then, is one of the two things; the other is getting acquainted with Miss Edgeworth. If you would give a silver sixpence, as you say, to see us together, each of us would, I am sure, have given a silver crown (no small part now of the real cash contained in anybody's purse) to have seen you a third in our party. I have found her a frank, animated, sensible, and amusing woman, entirely free from affectation of any kind, and of a confiding and affectionate and friendly disposition that has really gained upon my heart. We met a good many times in large parties, and thrice in a more familiar way; and when we parted she was in tears like one who takes leave of an old friend. She has been received by everybody, the first in literature and the first in rank, with the most gratifying eagerness and respect, and has pleased—I should rather say delighted—them all. She is cheerful, and talks easily and fluently, seems interested in every subject that comes into play, and tells her little anecdote or story (when her father does not take

it out of her mouth) very pleasantly. However, in regard to her father, tho' it is the fashion to call him a great bore, she is not so much hampered as she must have been when in Edin^r^, where I was told she could not get leave to speak to anybody, and therefore kept in the background wherever she went. When they take up the same thing now they have a fair wrangle (tho' a good-humoured one) for it, and she as often gets the better as he. He is, to be sure, a strange mortal, with no great *tact*, as it is called, and some small matters of conceit; yet his daughter is so strongly attached to him that I am sure he must have some real good in him; and, convinced of this, I have taken a goodwill to him in spite of fashion, and maintain that if he would just speak one half of what he speaks he would be a very agreeable man.

You would have been amused if you had seen with what eagerness people crowded to get a sight of Miss Edgeworth,—who is very short,—peeping over shoulders and between curl'd *têtes* to get but one look. She said very well herself, at a party where I met her, that the crowd closed over her. She did indeed cause a strange commotion; and had Mad^m^ Stael come as she was expected at the same time, I don't know what would have happened; the town must have run mad altogether. She, Mad^m^ Stael, is now arrived, and has the whole field to herself; but her reign for this season must be short, as the company will so soon leave town. . . .

I have been reading lately Lord Byron's new poem, the *Giaour*, which I suppose you have seen. There are beautiful passages in it; the sinking of the body into the sea, the murder of Hassan, and the simile of the butterfly chased by a child, compared to another vain pursuit, which is eminently beautiful, etc.; and on the first reading, notwithstanding the strange broken way of *insinuating* the story, it pleased me exceedingly. However, after being open-

mouthed in its praise for a day or two, when I came to read it a second time, a great part of the charm, I know not how, had fled. He is satisfied with giving the energy of passion, without its nobleness and grace, and one cannot be the least interested for either Leila or her Giaour, but very well satisfied that they should either be drowned or confined in a monastery, as the poet may see fit. Hassan is the only person in the story that I could sympathize with.

Lord B. has no mean portion of native genius; but he seems to me, notwithstanding the very different character of his persons and stories, to have Walter Scott perpetually in his eye. I wonder if he is himself aware of this, and whether he would not be ready to break my head for saying so. There were touches here and there at which I could not help calling out your name, viz., where he says, on the ambushed foes firing on the followers of Hassan four or five—I forget the number—came to the ground, and "three shall *never* mount again." I say not this to his discredit; I believe he has not imitated such graces from you, but caught them. Tho' passion, as he chuses to paint it, is revolting, yet it is naturally and forcibly expressed, and if he thought more worthily of human nature he might, I should think, excel in tragedy, and possibly he may turn his thoughts this way.

How I have filled up my paper with I don't know what. Farewell! it is time to have done. I hope this will find yourself and Mrs. Scott and the children well, and offer my kindest wishes most cordially.—With all kind and sisterly goodwill, yours truly, J. Baillie.

TO MORRITT.

Abbotsford, Melrose, 13*th July* 1813.

. . . Here we are *al fresco* at length enjoying the sweet air of Tweedside, instead of the stifling fumes of the Parliament House. Old Hutton, the Geologist, *parcus et infre-*

quens Deorum cultor, used to say it was worth while going to a presbyterian kirk for the pleasure of coming out, and truly I am of the same opinion as to the Court of Session. Everything is flourishing here magnificently, and some of my new planted trees actually rival an expanded umbrella in height and extent of shade. I was fortunate enough to be in town when Lord Compton and Mr. Pemberton passed through. They appear to be very good young men.[1] I spent part of Sunday in showing them the Abbey and other memorables, and they dined and spent the day with us. I have given them a letter to Mrs. Clephane, for as they are bound for Staffa, and the Laird is not at Ulva, it will be a point of consequence to find them some accommodation in the land of mist and billows.

Your account of Jeffrey's retreat was the right reading. I remember seeing the young lady, some time ago, at his house at dinner. There is I believe a family connection between the parties! Meantime the *Review* is put into commission. John Murray, Professor Playfair, and some third person whom I forget (Thos. Thomson, I believe), are the Commissioners. What halcyon days for poor bards and authors! I think *Triermain* begins to be more noticed. I hear much of it in society, and nobody with us smokes the truth. We keep our purpose of being at Rokeby in the first week of August, though we are in some degree dependent on the motions of our great Marquis. My present intention is to be at Drumlanrig about the 25th,

[1] Morritt wrote . . . "You will very likely hear of me about the time you receive this, from Lord Compton and Mr. Pemberton, two young friends of mine, who are travelling your road, and to whom I gave a letter for you, as I wished to procure them the opportunity of seeing Edinburgh under your auspices. Lord Compton is Lord Northampton's eldest son, and Mr. Pemberton, a young Shropshire gentleman. They stayed here four or five days, and I hope will make an interesting tour.

I hear Jeffrey's tour to America is not to avoid, but to fetch a wife, and that she is a niece of Johnny Wilkes, bred and born in America. What a portentous conjunction of philosophic republicanism!"

where I shall see what the Duke of Buccleuch is making of his new domain, and lend him some of my Gothic knowledge, if he will accept it, to put his castle into repair. I am told it is a grand old chateau, but my own early recollections make it a very gloomy one. Will there be any chance of Heber's being in Yorkshire in August? I fear not; he skips about like a flea in a blanket, and no man knows where to find him. . . .

TO THE SAME.[1]

BROUGH, *Sunday*, 10*th August* 1813.

MY DEAR MORRITT,—Our disappointment of this morning, which on any other occasion would have been the theme of sufficient mortification, is quite lost in anxiety about dear Mrs. Morritt's health. I trust this will find her continuing better, and would never have forgiven you had you allowed us upon any point of mere ceremony (and what better could our meeting, under such circumstances, have been) to have come forward at the risk of disturbing her. When we hear that she is getting stout we will talk of taking amends for our little tour, either on our return from London, if we go there next spring, or by your coming to Abbotsford next autumn, for my cottage, though very small, has room for Mrs. Morritt and you. All this discussion will be for a happier moment; meanwhile I write chiefly to assure you of our deep and sincere interest in your present distress, and to beg you will let me know how Mrs. Morritt is, by a line addressed to Abbotsford, where we will be I think by Saturday. I intend going a little out of the direct road to spend a day or two with Southey, if I have the good fortune to find him at home at Keswick. —Believe me ever, dear Morritt, most faithfully yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

[1] After leaving Lord Abercorn Scott proceeded towards Rokeby, but on reaching Brough he heard of the alarming illness of Mrs. Morritt, and turned his steps to Keswick.

TO M. W. HARTSTONGE.

Abbotsford, 21*st August* [1813].

. . . We were delighted with Drumlanrig, which is a most princely abode, a large Gothic quadrangular building in style and character not unlike Heriot's Hospital in Edinburgh, and plann'd by the same great master, Inigo Jones.[1] It is situated on the extremity of a lofty hill, which projects like a sort of promontory from a mountainous background, and overlooks a large tract of comparatively open country, so that the castle looks quite the queen of the valley. The Nith runs near it, through a most romantic channel of broken rocks, where the walk of the last Duchess of Queensberry, "fair Kitty, blooming, young and gay," is led with some taste, but the park and the mountains are sorely divested of wood, the late abominable "old Q." having laid the axe to the root with a witness.[2]

After ten days' residence with our Chief and his Lady, we strolled on as far as Keswick, where I spent a day with Southey. He read me some parts of a poem to be entitled *Don Roderick* (the last Gothic King of Spain being the hero). It is most highly impressive, and what is curious, he has a picture of Don Roderick at confession, an exact pendant or counterpart to mine, for he represents him a man more sinned against than sinning. As he had not seen my verses, the coincidence was very striking.[3]

As for myself the sight of Carlisle Castle set me trumping up a tale (not for publication, being too wild and clannish), called *Kinmont Willie*: you will find the story in the *Border Minstrelsy*. If I have ever courage to write out my tale, you shall have a copy.—I ever am, most truly yours,

Walter Scott.

[1] The Architect of Heriot's Hospital, Edinburgh, is now generally understood to have been W. Wallace, "the King's Master Mason." At his death in 1631, the work was carried on by William Aytoun.

[2] William, third Earl of March and fourth Duke of Queensberry.

[3] See Scott's *Poetical Works*, vol. ix. pp. 376-7.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

Sept. 3d, 1813.

My dear Lady Abercorn,—Our little trip was soon ended, and we got into all our cottage routine without any incident worth telling, excepting that I have been surprised by an offer of the situation of poet laureate, vacant by the death of Mr. Pye. This was very handsome on the part of the Prince Regent, and I feel flattered accordingly; but there were many reasons against accepting the appointment, and I have accordingly declined it, with every expression of respect and gratitude. The necessity of writing odes twice a year is a difficulty which no one ought to encounter who has any poetical character to lose; at least I am sure I should find it insurmountable. The thing might be easily done in a decent sort of way as old Whitehead himself describes it—

> "Whose Muse obliged by sack and pension
> Without a subject or invention,
> Must certain words in order set
> As innocent as a Gazette,
> Must some half meaning half disguise,
> And utter neither truth nor lies."

But this mediocrity of performance is precisely what is most intolerable in poetry, and I should neither have done justice to the Prince's judgment nor credit to my own, had I accepted it without the hope of doing something better than making milk-and-water verses about the "natal day" and the "new-born year." When the office was offered to Gray, it was offered as a sinecure, and indeed I think it would become the Prince's good taste to abolish the absurd and ridiculous usage of compelling a poor devil to write bad verses twice a year, by way of honouring the royal family and ministry for the time being; and until this be done, I think it will be difficult to get a man of real talent, unless from the mere love of the salary, to undertake the office. As for myself, all I have to fear in the matter is

that some busy misrepresenter may whisper in the Regent's ear, that some Kensington House[1] partialities rendered me unwilling to accept an office in the Royal Household so handsomely offered by H. R. H's express direction. I trust however this will not be the case, as I have stated frankly that any poetical efforts which may have attracted H. R. H's approbation have been free and spontaneous, and that I fear to trammel myself with the regular discharge of a constant and recurring poetical commemoration,—that I could not be exculpated if I accepted the situation so honourably tendered to me, unless I was conscious of the power of approaching to such excellence as might vindicate the selection the Prince had made, that besides I held professional appointments of some value, and this seemed to be one of the few things calculated to provide for some literary person who had no other adequate establishment or opening to fortune. All this I stated as civilly as I possibly could, and I think the Prince, who has both good sense and good taste, will easily understand that there may be other reasons which cannot so well be written, why I should reject the wreath "profaned by Cibber and contemned by Gray." . . .

TO C. CARPENTER.

ABBOTSFORD, *Sept.* 3*d*, 1813.

MY DEAR CARPENTER,—I have just got your letter of 10th of February, and a fortnight before Charlotte received the valuable and much admired package of cottons and long cloths, which she values still more as a pledge of Mrs. Carpenter's regard and friendship. Our little girls will be all as fine as so many little Queens, and Charlotte herself will feel no little pride and satisfaction in appearing in a dress which she owes to the kindness of so valued a

[1] Then the residence of the Princess of Wales.

relation. I observe Mrs. Carpenter finally purposes leaving India in October. I should like very much to be in England on her arrival, and if possible, I will certainly contrive it. We have two months' vacation from 12th March to 12th May, during which time I should think it likely Mrs. Carpenter will reach Britain, and should she then think of coming North, I will undertake to be her escort, if she will accept me. . . .

Our domestic news is limited to our being all well; the little people are much what I could wish them, very affectionate to each other, and dutiful to us; they have all rather good parts, and little Charles, your name-son, shews marks of genius which may perhaps turn to something remarkable. But as our Scotch proverb says, "It is a long time to the saddling of a foal." . . .

TO MORRITT.

ABBOTSFORD, *4th September* [1813].

MY DEAR MORRITT,—Our journey here was of course not the pleasantest considering the state in which we left Mrs. Morritt's health. And on taking up our usual occupations my quiet has been disturbed by the offer of the Laurel,—nothing less if you please. The matter was very handsomely meant by the Prince Regent, and as handsomely expressed, and I was somewhat puzzled how to avoid the ungracious appearance of flinging an intended favour back in the donor's face. But it was impossible to think of being Laureate. A sort of ridicule has always attached to the character, and Horace himself could not have made the regular duty of the office decently respectable. Besides, the country has done its part by me, and this appointment seems rather to belong to some one who has dedicated his time to literature, independent of every other profession. Last of all, a place in the household is

a sort of tie on votes and political conduct, and no man ought to pledge himself in these matters, since ministers might be changed, and then the Ex-Laureate, which I should probably soon be, would make rather an absurd figure. So I transmitted my *nolo* in the civillest terms I could devise,[1] and I think you will approve of my having done so. I am much more flattered with Marshal Beresford's[2] approbation than with that of Principalities and Powers. I have a natural love for a soldier, which would have been the mode of life I would have chosen in preference to all others but for my lameness. And yet I made the discovery a good many years since that I should have been but an indifferent soldier. The essence of military skill rests upon mathematical principle, combined with an accurate estimate of the moral and physical faculties of your own troops, and those who are opposed to you. The most simple and effectual mode of bringing a given number of men to a certain point at a certain moment is a singularly dry study, and yet it comprehends the grand principle of military tactics. So I am well contented to look at war poetically and to give it all the cast of chivalry and romance, which in fact is a mere appendage to the reality like the red coats, standard, and kettledrums. But my interest remains unabated in those who have fought the good fight, and to Marshal Beresford I think we owe the splendid example of a regenerated people. The dry bones have been warmed into life under his admirable management, and I trust he will be spared to enjoy those honours which are due to his labours and hazards of every description. The meeting at Rokeby will be indeed a joyous one, and happy shall I be when it takes place.

[1] See Letters to Lord Hertford, and Mr. Clarke, the Regent's Librarian, in *Life*, vol. iv. pp. 106 and 143.

[2] Marshal Beresford had been reading *Rokeby*, and he requested Mr. Morritt to convey to the author his acknowledgement for the handsome compliment he had paid him in *Don Roderick*. . . .

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

. . . I FEAR (yet why should I say so in the circumstances?) that the fatal termination of the poor old monarch's illness will soon (if it has not already) restore Dr. Baillie to his family. I would I could augur well of what is to follow, but, alas! a public defiance of morality is but a bad bottoming for a new reign; it is incalculable, the weight which George the III. derived from his domestic conduct. But we must hope the best, and none is more willing to hope it than I, who would do my little best for the Crown of England if it hung upon a hedge stake. When I shall come to rummage your portfolio and eat your pudding at Hampstead is very uncertain. If I should walk in the morning after you receive my letter, pray do not take me for a *wraith*;[1] but it is much more likely I shall not see London for several years as I did not come up this summer when I had real and serious business to do. My most agreeable errand will be to claim the promised communication of your future plans.—Adieu, God bless you, W. SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

ABBOTSFORD, *6th November* 1813.

MANY thanks, my dearest friend, for your kind letter, which found us loitering away our time as usual by what some one calls "well-sung Tweed's baronial stream." It is really a fine, though not a very large, river when it passes my kingdom of Barataria, and is at this moment mustering up all its waters with a voice like distant thunder. Alas! it is a summons for me to prepare for scenes of a very different kind, and to abandon my cottage for the noise and dissonance of our law courts which commence their

[1] An apparition in likeness of a person appearing soon before or soon after death.—*Jamieson.*

sessions on the 11th. I cannot say with the patient submission of Blackstone—

> "Then welcome business, welcome strife,
> Welcome the cares and thorns of life,
> The drowsy bench, the babbling hall,
> For thee, fair Justice, welcome all."[1]

On the contrary, I fear if Justice slept till I went to Edinburgh to wake her, her votaries would think her deaf as well as blind. But go I must, and it is no small comfort to think we have had the most delightful season ever remembered in Scotland, and that part of it was employed, my dear friend, in meeting you.[2]

Mrs. Morritt, whose indisposition alarmed us not a little, is getting better,—not so much so, however, as to give great confidence in her future health.

I am sorry nothing can be done for poor Maturin; but I cannot think of intruding myself upon Lord

[1] *The Lawyer's Farewell to his Muse.*

[2] It is worth repeating Scott's description of Lord Abercorn's *attelage* and mode of travelling to and from Ireland. He met the procession between Carlisle and Longtown:—"The ladies of the family and the household occupied four or five carriages, all drawn by the Marquis's own horses, while the noble lord himself brought up the rear, mounted on horseback, but decorated with the ribbon of the order of the Garter. On meeting the cavalcade, Scott turned with them, and he was not a little amused when they reached the village of Longtown, which he had ridden through an hour or two before, with the preparations which he found there made for the dinner of the party. The Marquis's major-domo and cook had arrived there at an early hour in the morning, and everything was now arranged for his reception in the paltry little public-house, as nearly as possible in the style usual in his own lordly mansions. The ducks and geese that had been dabbling three or four hours ago in the village pond were now ready to make their appearance under numberless disguises as *entrées*; a regular bill-of-fare flanked the noble Marquis's allotted cover; every huckaback towel in the place had been pressed to do service as a napkin; and, that nothing might be wanting to the mimicry of splendour, the lady's poor remnants of crockery and pewter had been furbished up, and mustered in solemn order on a crazy old *buffet*, which was to represent a sideboard worthy of Lucullus."—*Life*, iv. p. 95.

Whitworth, for whose character and situation I have the respect which both so eminently demand. What could he think of me but as the most conceited coxcomb in the world, if because my writings may have given him an hour's amusement, I should think myself entitled to intrude any one on his patronages merely as a friend of mine? I never saw Mr. Maturin in my life, and probably never shall, nor have I any other motive in wishing him well than that which I think would be common to me with Lord Whitworth,—the wish namely to assist a man of very considerable literary powers, and, as I am informed, of a most estimable private character, who is fighting manfully with adverse circumstances and a feeling mind. As his present employment is to receive as pupils and boarders such young men as attend Trinity College, it may perhaps be in your ladyship's power to mention his name to any of your Irish friends who may wish such an accommodation for their sons; and in doing so I am convinced you would serve them as well as this unfortunate young man. His character renders him, I understand, very fit for such a trust, and after all it is astonishing how much the slightest glimpse of encouragement from such high rank and fashion as yours, my dear Lady Marchioness, will do for a person in his situation. Your encouragement is like a beam of the sun, productive of effects far above your own calculation, and if a poor *roturier* may judge, I think it one of the most enviable attributes of rank that you can do so much good *à peu de frais.* What an excellent Bishop of London you have given the kingdom in Mr. Howley. I hope he has not forgotten me, as I shall be quite delighted to register a bishop among my friends. His charge is, I should suppose, among the most important in England, and the trust could not be reposed in more worthy hands.

So Lord Aberdeen begins to figure in the great game,

and a greater sure was never played for by nations.[1] If I had nothing else to do but to indulge a wayward and wandering spirit, I think I would set off to make him a visit at Commotau,[2] and I would trust to his receiving me like a harper in an old ballad—

> "Minstrel, they said thou sing'st so sweet,
> Fair entrance thou shalt win."

I intend to write to him one of these days to procure me, if possible, a sketch or print of the Cossack Hettman Platow. An English officer who was known to this renowned partisan begged one of his lances to add to my collection of arms, but I believe it was lost when the French re-entered Hamburg. Platow is a great favourite of mine, as well from Sir Robert Wilson's account of him formerly, as from his conduct during the campaign of Moscow.

I am truly grieved for what you tell me of a great lady. She has thrown away her cards most deplorably in suffering herself to be made a catspaw of to serve the purposes of the very people who at one time would willingly have had her head off. That she should leave quietly is the best her friends can wish her, though it is not, I should think, quite agreeable to her temper.[3]

[1] Lord Aberdeen had gone as special Envoy to Austria from Britain.

[2] Kommotau in Saxony, the temporary headquarters of the Emperor Francis.

[3] The Princess of Wales.

CHAPTER X

1814

EDINBURGH AND ABBOTSFORD

Wild music peals, the clansman grasps his glaive,
  And Gladsmuir owns that faulchion's deadly sway;
Hide, hapless Albyn, hide fair honour's grave,
  And deepest horrors shroud Drummossie's day!
And bid thy broadest, darkest forest's wave
  Conceal his mountain path, his lowly bed;
And bid each mist-clad hill, each dropping cave,
  Shed "dews and wild flowers" on the wanderer's head.
Ah! bathe in drops of balm his fever'd brain;
Ah! hide the murder'd friend, the ghastly spectre train.

Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. iii. p. lxxviii. 1810.

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1814—AGE 43

Presented with the Freedom of the City of Edinburgh, Jan. 5, 1814.

Voyage in the Light-house Yacht to Orkney, Shetland, and Hebrides, July 29 to Sept. 8.

Wordsworth visits Abbotsford in summer.

Account of the Eyrbiggia Saga, published in *Northern Antiquities*.

Swift's Life and Works, 19 vols. 8vo, published by Constable, July.

Waverley, 3 vols. 12mo, published by Constable, 7th July.

CHAPTER X.

TO MISS SMITH.

January 8th, [1814].

. . . I SEE by to-day's *Courier* that you have been again summoned to the presence of royalty; so you will be quite a court lady, and we will all ask favours of you. I shall certainly be both curious and pleased to see a woman of Made. de Stael's literary reputation, though probably I may see very little of her, unless particularly introduced, for you know our circle is a very small one, and she will be quite immersed among all the gay parties of this northern metropolis. They are all, I hear, dying to see her; but our latest reports on the subject will not allow that there is now much chance of their being gratified, for we hear her Scottish journey is postponed. . . .

Coleridge has succeeded so well that I trust he will write again. There is perhaps too much of the mist of metaphysics in his dialogue, but he is naturally a grand poet. His verses on Love, I think, are among the most beautiful in the English language. Let me know if you have seen them, as I have a copy of them as they stood in their original form, which was afterwards altered for the worse. . . .

I can tell you almost nothing of our household. Two nights since we were at a splendid gala of the Duke of Buccleuch on Twelfth-night. The Duchess was so kind as to ask Walter and Sophia, who, as they had never seen anything of the kind, were enchanted beyond description. The whole house was open'd and illuminated, and I think

there were about 300 guests; so that even to my eyes, pretty much accustomed to fine parties from some London experience, the effect was strikingly magnificent; and I was proud of it, for the honour of my chieftain and clan.

We spent the summer at Abbotsford, which is far from being so pleasant as Ashestiel, all the planting being of my own making; but everybody (after abusing me for buying the ugliest place on Tweedside) begins now to come over to my side. I think it will be very pretty six or seven years hence, whoever may come to see and enjoy, for the sweep of the river is a very fine one of almost a mile in length, and the ground is very unequal and therefore well adapted for showing off trees. The opposite side belongs to my friend and kinsman, young Scott of Gala, who has in the kindest possible manner planted any banks which could assist my prospect.

Mrs. Scott sends kind compliments, and I ever am, my dear little friend, very truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO MORRITT.

15th Jany. 1814.

ONCE more many and kind thanks to you. But I cannot express the pain your letter gives me on Mrs. Morritt's account and yours. I had heard something of it from Lady Douglas, but not till two days since. I trust in God that she will be able to persevere in the course which may be recommended to ensure a life so necessary to your happiness, and to that of all who know her. Have you consulted Baillie? I have great faith in him; he has less quackery than is usual in his profession, and is a most upright and sound-thinking man. Alas, my dear friend, this is one of those cases in which we offer every advice at random, with scarce the hope of suggesting anything that has

not occurred to the sufferer. And what can I say in the way of consolation, but what your own religion and philosophy back an hundred times better than those maxims which, even when the motive cannot be doubted, serve but to aggravate instead of allaying the feelings of affection, wounded as yours? Would to God it were in my power to say or do anything which could amuse Mrs. M., for judging from what you say, much of the disorder necessarily lies in the nerves, and might perhaps be subject to be occasionally relieved by amusement. At any rate I am sure if Mrs. M. sees how much you suffer, and you are not the sort of person to conceal it unless by busying yourself in speaking or reading, your distress is the most likely thing to add to her disorder. You must therefore put a constraint on yourself, while she is undergoing a painful process which I trust will end in restoration of her health; and if you think that by writing frequently or sending you the trifles of the day, I could aid you in a task so painful, I will be the most faithful correspondent you ever had in your life.[1] Poor Walter, who has not forgot Mrs. Morritt's kindness of last year, turned quite pale and then red, and then broke into tears, and ran from table when he heard she was very unwell, which was great feeling for a rough High-school boy. I need not say how much Mrs. Scott shares in all your distress.

It takes away great part of my wish to see London this spring, unless I heard Mrs. Morritt were getting better, and will be an additional motive for my wishing to take a short tour upon the Continent, which will be open to us if these wonderful good news continue.

Pray inquire after my letter if you have not received it. There may be things in it which I should not like to fall into other hands.

[1] It will be seen that one of the earliest printed copies of *Waverley* was sent for Mrs. Morritt's entertainment.

I do not send any compliments to Mrs. M. because you must not read her this letter, but you will not doubt my best and most friendly wishes, as well as Charlotte's. —Yours ever, WALTER SCOTT.

TO THE SAME.

NOTHING could be more welcome, my dear Morritt, than your two last letters announcing a lightening in the domestic horizon, lately so unhappily overclouded. I trust your new regimen for our dear friend will succeed, and that she will be supported by the state of your hopes and spirits. In the strange and inexplicable combination of our body and soul, the former is much supported even in the most trying circumstances by the elasticity of the mind, and I know Mrs. Morritt's feelings will depend much upon yours even during the period of extreme weakness. It is wonderful how stomach complaints assume forms capable of deceiving the best medical men. My friend Rutherford of Edgerston languished for two years under a disease with the most alarming symptoms—faintings, cold sweats, total loss of appetite, perpetual and most oppressive headaches and low fever. He found a physician however at Bath, who discovered that the cause of all this misery were some obstructions which he contrived to remove by severe medicine, and to my great pleasure, I find my old friend as lively, active, and able to drink a glass of claret as ever he was in his life. It is the most extraordinary recovery I ever witnessed, and shews how the worst symptoms may give way to proper treatment, when the radical cause of mischief is once fairly ascertained.

We have had here the most severe snow-storm I ever witnessed, excepting 1795. The London Mails were stopp'd for four days, a circumstance almost unheard of, and they

still come irregularly. Two Russian friends of Lord Pembroke who lived a good deal with us were the loudest in their complaints of the cold weather, and astonished to see everybody enduring it without furs. The eldest a Mons. Politica (an excellent name for a diplomatist, which is his profession) is a very well informed and pleasant man, and has been over the whole world, I believe. His companion is a very good and pleasant young man, Mons. Severin, son of the Minister of Justice at Petersburg. There is little chance of your meeting them in the present circumstances, but should it so happen, I think you will like them. Have you observed in the *Courier* a very magnificent account of the Battle of Leipsic by an eye-witness—not a military detail, but what is more interesting to a non-combatant, the general impression received by a distant spectator of this tremendous scene? I have written to London for the pamphlet which, if it corresponds with the extract, must be one of the most interesting I ever read.[1] It has all the materials for painting or poetry richly scattered through it. Pray send for it if you have not already perused it, and let me have your opinion.

I send you enclosed an etching done to the life by my friend Charles Sharpe. You don't know him I think, but Lady Louisa does. The likeness you will readily recognise, at least so I am told, for I never saw Corinne. Don't say you got it from me, as I have no wish to commit myself with a Lady of such literary distinction, and who, besides, threatens us with a visit here, where I may probably have the curiosity to see her at least, though only from curiosity.

As your conscience has very few things to answer for, you must still burthen it with the secret of the *Bridal.* It is spreading very rapidly, and I have one or two little faery romances which will make a second volume, and

[1] Shobert's *Narrative* from 14th to 19th October 1813, Lond. 1814.

which I would wish published, but not with my name. The truth is that this sort of muddling work amuses me, and I am something in the condition of Joseph Surface who was embarrassed by getting himself too good a reputation; for many things would please people well enough anonymously, which, if they bore me on the title-page, would just give me that sort of ill-name which precedes hanging, and that would be in many respects inconvenient if I thought of again trying a *grande opus*. I will give you a hundred good reasons when we meet for not owning the *Bridal* till I either secede entirely from the field of literature, or from that of life.

Poor Weber could not have intruded upon you; he is, I find,—and I am glad to find it,—put under medical restraint for some time, which I have not the least doubt will bring him round. It is a most melancholy business and I fear has been helped by distress.[1]

We are raising a subscription (horrid word) for a monument to Burns; an honour long delayed, perhaps till some parts of his character were forgotten by those among whom he lived. I am anxious to forward it, and if you think you can get me a few guineas among your acquaintances when you begin to go about a little, I will send you a copy of the resolutions. The situation is a very fine one, and if the subscription is successful, of which I have little doubt, it will be a credit to the country, and a great ornament to Dumfries. There are few people who do not owe a guinea or two to Burns's memory for the pleasure his works have afforded them.

What a scene Stanley is now witnessing![2] I hope he keeps a Journal and makes memoranda of all that comes under his eyes, both as to the useful, the curious, and the

[1] For an account of Weber, Scott's amanuensis, see *Life*, *passim*.

[2] Morritt's nephew, who was then with Sir George Rose in Germany.

picturesque. I wish our prisoners could be delivered at Verdun. I think if a polt of Cossacks were promised a thousand pounds or so from the patriotic fund, they would contrive to redeem them. Jock of the Side, Wat of Harden, or any of our border moss-troopers,—a kind of Cossack in their own way—would have made a good hand of such a job. . . . Charlotte sends a thousand kind wishes to Mrs. Morritt.—Yours ever, W. Scott.

TO THE DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUCH.

March 1814.

The Draft for £10, 10s. I will transmit to the Ettrick bard as soon as I reach Edin^r^, and I am afraid it will be with him as with Bayes's army, who exclaimed on a similar donation, "We have not seen so much the Lord knows when."[1] But I trust his gratitude will be equal to your kindness and munificence.

Your Grace does me but justice in supposing how deeply I was interested in the dreadful misfortune at Ditton.[2] But in lamenting so many things which money cannot repair, and especially the curious old library which I had so often wished to rummage, we must not forget the consolatory view of the disaster, but be thankful that consequences more melancholy and equally irretrievable have not taken place. . . . If your Grace will suppose me chatting to you, I will tell you of a letter, that is the contents of one, which my mother used to inculcate upon us when in the nursery, as containing a sovereign antidote in cases like that of Ditton. While she was residing with an uncle on the sea-coast of East Lothian, a small brig, ship and cargo, the property of the master who sailed her, chanced to be stranded near their place of residence on a stormy winter night. The master and crew were with difficulty saved from the wreck, which shortly after, in the

[1] The *Rehearsal*. [2] The destruction by fire of Ditton Park near Windsor.

sea-phrase, parted, and was totally lost. The sailors were brought to my uncle's house as the nearest place of hospitable refuge, but the master refused even to taste food or approach a fire till he had given his wife an account of his disaster in these words, which he gave to my relative in an unsealed billet,—"Dear Annie, the *Lovely Peggy* (*i.e.* his ship) is no more, but let not your heart be cast down for the loss of world's gear (worldly wealth) while I am Adam Greig." The poor fellow was sensible, and truly so doubtless, that all could be replaced to his wife and family while he was well and able to exert himself to repair his loss.[1]

There has been dreadful weather till to-day. The snow lay thick both on the hills and fields here yesterday, and continued falling thick and fast the whole day, with a north-east wind, which might boast some six weeks' duration. All of a sudden we have this morning waked in absolute summer, greatly to the refreshment of the young lambs and grass and corn, not forgetting my young trees and shrubs at Abbotsford.

There are no news in the forest, unless a report that the Duke takes Newark into his own hand, as the phrase is, which, if it prove true, will make Bowhill one of the finest Highland places in Scotland.

TO MORRITT.

[*Spring*, 1814.]

MY DEAR MORRITT,— . . . Jeffrey is returned here with his bride, very gay and very full of news. He had a grand skirmish with Madison, of which he gave me a very

[1] Scott had another story of the *Lovely Peggy* at an earlier stage when the unregenerate smuggler, John Blower, was her skipper. His widow said, "When I wad hae had him gie up the *Lovely Peggy*, ship and cargo, to be remembered in the prayers o' the congregation, he wad say to me—'they may pray that stand the risk, Peggy Bryce, for I've made insurance.'"—*St. Ronan's Well*, *W.N.* vol. xxxiii. p. 119.

diverting account. He describes the President as being an exceedingly mean-looking little man, who met him with three little ducking bows, and then extended a yellow withered hand to him like an old duck's foot. After these symptoms of fraternization, he proceeded to question the critic very solemnly touching the nature of the sensations which the American war excited in the British public. To which Jeffrey replied in his best *poco curante* style, that he believed nobody in Britain thought anything at all about the American war, and that he thought it likely that many well-informed people did not know that we were at war at all. Something, he said, he had heard about it at Liverpool, and once or twice when we heard of a frigate,[1] we used to wonder for a day and then think no more about it. He then gave battle on the principle of the war, saying that we only exercised the rights of nations, and that if America wanted a new international code, it was his business to propose such a one as might suit both parties, since otherwise we must go on exercising the acknowledged right vested in us by the law of nations, and defending ourselves when attacked, so that the war was quite defensive on our part. This, Madison told him very bitterly, was a mere verbal pleasantry. Jeffrey says that Madison is a mortal enemy to this country, and has been prophesying for four or five years past that every year would be the last of Britain's greatness. He adds too that Madison and his ministry are heartily tired of the war, and would fain back out of it if they could do so without giving great advantages to the other party.[2]

[1] The success of the American frigates in single encounters with the English during this unfortunate war was not only disagreeable but unexpected. At the same time the skill and courage with which the Americans handled and fought their ships extorted the respect of their opponents.

[2] President Madison, as sketched by a fellow-citizen, was a little, stoutish man, with powdered hair, and penetrating blue eye, grave in manner, and slow in speech, cer-

I think he has returned a much better subject than he went away, but when Brougham and Horner worry him a little I suppose he will hold his own tenets. He is very violent against peace with Bonaparte if the allies are disposed to carry on the war to his utter destruction. On the other hand, he told me this morning that he thought it would be very unreasonable to blame ministers for acceding to the best peace they could get if the Court of Austria would not proceed with the war.

TO THE SAME.[1]

9th July 1814.

MY DEAR MORRITT, . . . Now, I must account for my own laziness, which I do by referring you to a small anonymous sort of a novel, in three volumes, which you will receive by the mail of this day. It was a very old attempt of mine to embody some traits of those characters and manners peculiar to Scotland, the last remnants of which vanished during my own youth, so that few or no traces now remain. I had written great part of the first volume, and sketched other passages, when I mislaid the MS., and only found it by the merest accident as I was rummaging the drawers of an old cabinet; and I took the fancy of finishing it, which I did so fast that the last two volumes were written in three weeks. I had a great deal of fun in the accomplishment of this task, though I do not

tainly a great contrast to Jeffrey's slim, active little figure and sharp incisive voice. A more becoming account of the interview is given in Cockburn's *Life*, where we are told that Jeffrey sought it for the purpose of securing a safe passage for himself and his wife in a cartel ship. See also Washington Irving's *Life*, vol. i. p. 248, for Brevoort's letter of introduction to Jeffrey.

[1] This short extract from a letter already printed is the first reference to *Waverley* in the correspondence now before me. Beyond Erskine, the Ballantynes, and Constable, Morritt appears to have been the only friend intrusted with the secret at this date. The book was published on 7th July.

expect that it will be popular in the South, as much of the humour, if there be any, is local, and some of it even professional. You, however, who are an adopted Scotchman, will find some amusement in it. It has made a very strong impression here, and the good people of Edinburgh are busied in tracing the author, and in finding out originals for the portraits it contains. In the first case, they will probably find it difficult to convict the guilty author, although he is far from escaping suspicion, for Jeffrey has offered to make oath that it is mine, and another great critic has tendered his affidavit *ex contrario*; so that these authorities have divided the good town. However, the thing has succeeded very well, and is thought highly of. I don't know if it has got to London yet. I intend to maintain my *incognito*. Let me know your opinion about it. I should be most happy if I could think it would amuse a painful thought at this anxious moment. I was in hopes Mrs. Morritt was getting so much better that this relapse affects me very much.

FROM MORRITT.

July 14th, [1814].

My dear Scott,—How the story of *Waverley* may continue in the two last volumes I am not able to divine, but as far as we have read pray let us thank you for the castle of Tully-Veolan and the delightful drinking bout at Luckie Macleary's, no less than for the character of the Laird of Balmawhapple, and of William Rose's motley follower, commonly yclept Caliban.[1] If the completion of the story is equal to what we have just devoured, it deserves a place amongst our standard works. . . .

Sir Everard, Mrs. Rachel, and the Baron of Bradwar-

[1] Davie Gellatley was thought to have been sketched from David Hinves. —See *Journal*, vol. ii. p. 186, note.

dine are, I think, in the first rank of portraits for nature and character. . . . The ballad of St. Swithin and scraps of old songs were measures of danger if you meant to continue in concealment, but you wear your disguise something after the manner of our friend Bottom the weaver, and the reality will in spite of you peep out.

Perhaps I like what I have read even more than I should at any other time, because never came a kindness so gratefully and opportunely. Mrs. Morritt is really better than she has been for some time, and in the long tedious confinement which such an illness inflicts, and the weakness which makes books of amusement the only source of her enjoyment, the keenness of pleasure which your story has given to her has communicated itself to me. She bids me express in the strongest terms how very, very much she feels obliged to you for this attempt to afford her amusement, and assure you that nothing has given her so much delight in reading, as what we have read of this story, or in reflecting on, as the kind friendship which prompted you to send it for her at such a time.[1] She has gone to bed with her head full of adventures, and I promised her to express to you how much she enjoyed them. The strings you have touched of humour and pathos depending on national character and real life have,

[1] Scott replies on July 24th just before sailing to the Hebrides. "As to *Waverley*, I will play Sir Fretful for once, and assure you that I left the story to flag in the first volume on purpose; the second and third have rather more bustle and interest. I wished (with what success Heaven knows) to avoid the ordinary error of novel-writers, whose first volume is usually their best. But since it has served to amuse Mrs. Morritt and you *usque ab initio*, I have no doubt you will tolerate it even unto the end. It may really boast to be a tolerably faithful portrait of Scottish manners, and has been recognised as such in Edinburgh. The first edition of a thousand instantly disappeared, and the bookseller informs me that the second, of double the quantity, will not supply the market for long. As I shall be very anxious to know how Mrs. Morritt is, I hope to have a few lines from you on my return, which will be about the end of August or beginning of September." —See *Life*, vol. iv. pp. 174-5.

with few exceptions indeed, been so seldom touched that they have all the charm of novelty to us, and therefore you must not wonder that we as "strangers bid them welcome."

We are pretty absurd in Westminster, for you will see that Lord Cochrane is again to be a Senator, notwithstanding conviction, expulsion, and pillory.[1] At least so the electors resolved on the day of nomination, and nobody appeared to oppose him, while Sir Francis Burdett proclaimed his wrongs and his virtues to a mob. . . . This worthy synod unanimously acquitted the noble Lord of all sins, past, present, and to come.

Your Scotch aristocrats managed his forefather[2] better at the Brig of Lauder, who, I believe, did not deserve a *tow* half as well. Burdett spoke better and showed more talent for mischief than I gave him credit for; he is very well adapted to his work. I fear we shall have sad squabbling amongst ourselves now that we have no longer any foreign enemy; and in truth if the Regent was determined to draw down unpopularity and odium on his own head, he could hardly act better for the purpose than he does. The execrable folly of his expense, and the taste that disgraces it still more, is really more like madness than mere royal absurdity; besides all the silly squabbling about the Princess, and now the rebellion of his daughter, for which, however disastrous to us, nobody can pity him who recollects how he behaved himself to a much better father. Adieu, dear Scott; I envy your retreat at Abbotsford. Give our very kindest regards to Mrs. Scott and our young friends, and ever believe me, dear Scott, yours sincerely and affectionately,

J. B. S. Morritt.

[1] Lord Cochrane was saved from this last ignominy by the firmness of his colleague Sir Francis Burdett, who threatened the Government that if they carried out that part of the sentence he should stand beside him in the pillory.

[2] The favourite of James III. See *Tales of a Grandfather*.

FROM THE SAME.

LONDON, *July 21st*, [1814].

. . . WE have finished *Waverley*, and right sorry we are that we cannot forget it all and begin *de novo*. I wish however with all my heart I could persuade you to own it at once. If you could be supposed at first, from diffidence of success in a style of composition hitherto untried, to be unwilling to stake the fame you had acquired in a different branch of literature, on the event of a novel, your original concealment is accounted for; but really it is now worse than useless, for the volumes we have just read would add to the fame of the best poet in our language, by the extent and diversity of narrative and imagination they display; and your name would procure them readers who without it are justly averse to opening a blue-backed book, after the thousand and one annual abortions of the circulating library have terrified them at unknown authors. Besides this, amongst the reading world you are I find named as the author, not merely at Edinburgh, for I have heard here about Mr. Scott's novel, boldly pronounced, and the unknown author begins to be accused of a trick which I really think will be rather prejudicial than advantageous to your fame. Pray reconsider this, and reflect whether it is not worth while to descend from your ambush into the open field, where you will find more friends than enemies, and where your name and cognizance are already a host in themselves. . . . The story is very interesting, and very well varied from the humorous to the pathetic. The stile I think is equally happy, and never so redundant as to let the attention sleep.[1] . . .

You have quite attained the point which in your post-

[1] Scott, in reply, says on the 24th, that "he will *not own Waverley*;" his chief reason being that by doing so he would deprive himself of the pleasure of writing again.

script preface you propose as your object,—the discriminations of character which had hitherto been slurred over with clumsy national daubing. Waverley's character is very natural throughout: but I always feel a little spite against him for the ease with which he replaces Flora by a new mistress. She is too lovely to be so soon forgotten, even tho' she were inexorable, but you will say this is part of his unsettled character; and so it is, but I cannot help wishing the change had been in the contrary direction. . . .

Adieu, dear Scott, and with united love from us to all our friends at Abbotsford, believe me ever truly and affectionately yours, J. B. S. Morritt.

FROM THE SAME.

Rokeby, 22*d August* 1814.

My dear Scott,—As I suppose you are ere now almost at the end of your tour,[1] perhaps this will be in time to welcome you back to Abbotsford. I fear you have travelled under the wrathful influence of Jupiter Pluvius; at least we have had a great deal of rain and cold weather for the last fortnight, which may have destroyed some of the charms of the Hebrides. . . .

Your reasons for not owning *Waverley* are indeed cogent, and have had the success which seldom attends reason in this world, for they have convinced me that you are right, and that I was wrong. The more I read of the book, the more I liked it, and I rejoice to hear it has had so rapid a sale. We read it fairly twice through, besides occasional dips, so that you may be very sure it amused us, and I certainly liked it better on the second reading than even on the first. I am rejoiced that this young Falconbridge is not to be the last of his family. . . . I

[1] See *Life*, vol. iv. p. 176.

envy you the pleasure your tour must have given you, for I know your taste for such a trip as you proposed; pray impart the result of your meditations amongst the cliffs and sea-gulls, or embody them into some wild story that may amuse us all next winter. . . .

Yours truly and affectionately, J. B. S. Morritt.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

Edinburgh, *October 28th*, [1814].

My dear Mrs. Baillie,—If twenty years at the bar and within the bar had left me any blushes, they would absolutely burn the paper when I sit down to write to you; but you are aware I have been very busy, and that besides I have been a wanderer on the face—not of the earth, but of the ocean, for a good part of my usual play time. I assure you I can tell you something of deserts vast and antres dire, though I was not so fortunate as to meet any of the honest folks whose heads grow beneath their shoulders. Tales of mermaids, however, we had many; and saw the man who saw a sea-snake big enough to girdle the earth for what I know. But what I was particularly delighted with was to find that the sea agreed with me so very well that I may venture a little voyage whenever I have a mind. We were six weeks upon our tour, and visited almost every remarkable place in Orkney, Shetland, and the Hebrides. What was not quite so promising a sight, we saw an American, that same *Peacock*,[1] with a fiery tail, which annoy'd the trade so much in the channel between Britain and Ireland. We were prepared to run as well as we could, and fight when we could not help ourselves, when a breeze and a ridge of rocks

[1] Scott narrowly escaped being carried off a prisoner of war by the heavily-armed privateers *Peacock* and *Prince of Neufchatel*. For a description of this delightful cruise see his Diary, forming the greater portion of the fourth volume of the *Life*.

to our leeward stood our friend, and we got off for the fright.

So you have retired from your former prefix of Miss Joanna Baillie, and have adopted the more grave appellation of *Mrs.* Well, you may call yourself what you please on the backs of letters and visiting cards, but I will warrant you never get posterity to tack either Miss or Mrs. to the Quaker-like Joanna Baillie; we would as soon have Wm. Shakespeare, Esq.

Richardson was with us one day or two in summer with his wife, who seems very pleasing, but was then in delicate health. . . . I shewed Richardson the Pinasters; they had suffered much by the extreme drought of the season, but came about a good deal in November. I intend, in humble imitation of the hermit Fincal in the *Tales of the Genii*, to dedicate a seat to you in my bowers that are to be.[1] . . . In the meantime we look bare enough; but I will take care they shall make the most of their time and grow very fast, if you will promise to come down with your sister and see them next season. I trust however we shall meet before that, for I intend to be in London this spring, and hope to bring my wife and eldest girl with me. Sophia is a very good girl, and, like her namesake in "Tom Jones," plays and sings papa to sleep after dinner; only I have the "Bonny Earl of Murray," "Hughie Graeme," "Gil Morrice," and so forth, instead of "Bobbin Joan" and "St. George for England," which soothed the slumbers of honest Squire Western. She only croons after all. . . . I am very anxious to know what progress tragedy has been making, and when I am to have a peep. I assure you I shall be most faithful, and secret as the grave; besides, I want to hear of the Dr. and Mrs. Baillie, and of your sister, and

[1] See story of *Mirglip the Persian*. Scott soon afterwards tells his friend how he proposes to follow Fincal's example. — Also letter in *Life*, Nov. 1815, describing "Joanna's Bower."

what you have been all doing, and what preparing to do; how you liked Wales, and whether it put you in mind of poor old Scotland. There are few countries I long so much to see as Wales. The first time I set out to see it I was caught by the way and married, God help me! The next time, I went to London and spent all my money there. What will be my third interruption I do not know, but the circumstances seem ominous. And now I see from the face of the learned gentleman who is pleading at the bar that he will presently finish a very long, very elaborate, and very dry pleading upon an abstract point of law, so I shall pack up my papers in my green bag and give them to my *Brownie*; that is an attendant who does the whole duty of my office if I chuse it, and is paid by the public: and then I will go to a sale of prints and try to buy a fine one of Charles Edward, done in France, and suppressed. I dare say you, like a good Westland Whig, wish it may be a-going, a-going, gone before I can get to the sale.

Mrs. Scott joins in kind remembrances to you and Mrs. A. Baillie.—Ever, my dear friend, most respectfully yours,

Walter Scott.

TO SOUTHEY.

Edinburgh, 22*d December* 1814.

I had a most valuable proof of your friendly remembrance, some months ago, in the poem of *Don Roderick*. I know no instance in which your genius has been more successfully and honourably employ'd, and the high tone of poetry mingled with the most generous feelings of patriotism and private virtue would hand you down to posterity one of the highest of British poets, had you never written another line. I will not be tempted to say more upon this subject, except just to mention the interest with which I again perused those passages which I heard you read at

Keswick, and how much I was pleased to find that my memory, not quite so retentive as in early youth, had upon this occasion served me faithfully. I have also to thank you for your official Lyrics, which will make up a trio of real poets who have worn the laurel, Spenser, Dryden, and you. Your task will in future be more difficult, for in these piping days of peace what can you find to say, and our transatlantic campaigns have been so managed as to afford few subjects of poetry as laurels for our generals. It is a very humbling consideration that after having faced the lion, we should still be exposed to be gnawed by the rat, but it is the natural consequence of despising an enemy, —a consequence of national pride which has ever been its own severe punishment.

My own vacation was partly spent in a very pleasant voyage round the coast and islands of Scotland, of which we made a very complete survey, comprehending Zetland, Orkney, the Hebrides, and the remarkably wild and mountainous deserts of Sutherland and Ross. One cave I saw in particular, which I think greatly exceeds anything of the kind I ever heard of. There is an exterior cavern of great height and breadth and depth, like the vault of a cathedral. Within this huge cave, and opening by a sort of portal, closed half way up with a ledge of rock, we got access to a second cavern, an irregular circle in form, and completely filled with water. This was supplied by a considerable brook which fell from the height of at least eighty feet, through a small aperture in the rocky roof of the cave. The effect of the twilight, composed of such beams as could find their way through the cascade as it fell, was indescribably grand. We hoisted a boat into this subterranean lake, and pursued the adventure by water and land for a great way under ground.[1] Another

[1] See *Life*, vol. iv. pp. 280-290, for the full description of Uamh Smowe, Sutherlandshire.

cave which we visited in the isle of Eigg was strewed with human bones and skulls. The whole inhabitants of the isle having taken refuge in it to escape from the fury of the Macleods, whom they had offended, their lurking-place was discovered, and fire was maintained at the mouth of the cavern until every man and mother's son were suffocated. What a fine subject for Coleridge! This pleasant adventure only chanced about 150 years ago, as far as we could discover.

I think you will now be mourning for the affairs of Spain. Surely the same Ferdinand the Beloved is like the man, who when a friend had snatched down a fowling-piece, and successfully defended his home against robbers, afterwards very gratefully went to law with him for spoiling the lock of the gun. In two or three days, or rather next week, I will send you a thumping quarto being entitled and called *The Lord of the Isles.*

I was much disappointed at my absence from Abbotsford when Wordsworth called. I should have been particularly happy to have shaken him by the hand. . . .
Yours very truly, Walter Scott.

CHAPTER XI

1815

EDINBURGH AND ABBOTSFORD

"Go forth, my Song, upon thy venturous way;
Go boldly forth; nor yet thy master blame,
Who chose no patron for his humble lay,
And graced thy numbers with no friendly name,
Whose partial zeal might smooth thy path to fame.
There was—and O! how many sorrows crowd
Into these two brief words!—*there was* a claim
By generous friendship given—had fate allow'd,
It well had bid thee rank the proudest of the proud!

"All angel now—yet little less than all,
While still a pilgrim in our world below!
What 'vails it us that patience to recall,
Which hid its own to soothe all other woe;
What 'vails to tell, how Virtue's purest glow
Shone yet more lovely in a form so fair!
And, least of all, what 'vails the world should know,
That one poor garland, twined to deck thy hair,
Is hung upon thy hearse, to droop and wither there!"

Lines on the Duchess of Buccleuch
concluding *The Lord of the Isles.*

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1815—AGE 44

Scott visits London with wife and daughter for two months in March.

Scott visits Waterloo and Paris in August and September, and returns home by London, Kenilworth, and Rokeby.

Death of Mrs. Morritt in November.

Lord of the Isles, 4to, published by Constable in January.

Guy Mannering, 3 vols., published by Constable in February.

Memorie of the Somervilles, 2 vols. 8vo, published by Constable.

Essays on Chivalry and the Drama—(in *Encyclopædia Britannica*).

Field of Waterloo, 8vo, published by Constable in October.

Rowland's Poems, sq. 8vo, published by Laing and Blackwood.

The Ettrick Garland, roy. 8vo, Ballantyne, December 4.

Contribution to *Quarterly Review*—

Miss Austen's Emma, No. 27, October.

CHAPTER XI.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINR., *January 10th*, 1815.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—I hope you have long since received the *Lord of the Isles*; one of the first volumes out of the press was sent to you under an office cover. I could not superintend the sending away these copies as usual, because we were rather a *complaining* family, as the Scotch say. My eldest boy has contrived to have a decided smallpox, in defiance not only of vaccination, but of inoculation thereafter. You may be assured we were alarmed enough, for the appearance of the smallpox in this generation is like one of the giants in Ariosto who comes alive after he is killed. Nothing could be more easy than the manner in which he had the disorder, and he is now quite well. I propose to exhibit him along with the Indian Jugglers who are just arrived, as the youngster that has had the smallpox naturally after both vaccination and inoculation. I trust this matter will be closely looked into by medical men, for it will be a very serious business fifty years hence should the smallpox break out suddenly, as probably the lower class may neglect the vaccinating operation, or go through it superficially.

The world do me too much honour in giving me [blank in original]. What I know, or rather guess, about that work, I will tell your Ladyship when we meet, which will be soon, as I expect to be in London in the month of March.[1] I think I shall bring Mrs. Scott and your

[1] Reading Scott's letters to Lady Abercorn carefully, one sees that he wishes her to know that he was the author of the novels, but

Ladyship's acquaintance Sophia with me, and be about a month in London. If it were not for the equinox gales, which may make it uncomfortable for my companions, I would come up by sea, for if there is a route I am tired of, it is that vile North road, which has less to interest one than the same extent in any direction in Great Britain.

My plan for last spring was to have gone to the Continent, when I should have seen the great *entrée* into Paris. I was pretty sure of the light of Lord Aberdeen's countenance if I could have joined the great army, and might have hoped for Lord Castlereagh's also. At any rate if a horse or a mule could be got, I should have gone on very well, for few people submit with more indifference to want of accommodation of all kinds. I was disappointed in this by very exaggerated reports of the difficulty of passing through Flanders, and especially getting past Antwerp and Bergen-op-zoom. I was so angry at not seeing the grand crash that I had little curiosity about the subsequent part of the entertainment that was performed here.

As for my Irish journey, it was a mere excursion of twenty-four hours, for we were not longer upon the coast than was necessary to visit the Causeway, excepting a few minutes at Port Rush, where I saw your Ladyship's friend Dr. Richardson. I was only one of a large party, so that I could hardly have escaped from my friends even to the hospitality of Barons Court, though nothing would have delighted me more than to have surprised you on Irish ground. . . . As for the *Lord of the Isles*, I think it is my last poetical adventure, at least upon a large scale. I swear not, because I do not make any positive resolution,

as his letters were shown to her family and friends, he expressed them so as to avoid discovery. Even without these evasive replies Lady Abercorn needed no further confirmation of the authorship of *Guy Mannering* than Scott's own letter to her on the Dormont case. See *ante*, pp. 292-95.

but I think I have written enough, and it is unlikely I shall change my opinion.

I beg to be most respectfully remembered to the Marquis. Sophia is much honoured in your remembrance; she is now growing a great girl, and is very sensible and good-humoured, and is a great comfort to Charlotte and me. Indeed, if one dare judge from what appears in early life, my young people are all well disposed.

Next to seeing the great men themselves, nothing can equal beholding them on the canvas of Lawrence, who is one of the first geniuses of his art, and merits his extended fame. That is a pleasure I propose to receive soon.—Believe me ever, dear Lady Abercorn, your truly grateful and affectionate friend, WALTER SCOTT.

TO MORRITT.

EDINR., 21*st January* 1815.

DEAR MORRITT, . . . Best and kindest compliments. The weather here seems setting in for a *feeding storm*, as we call it when the snow lies so long that the sheep must be fed with hay. I have just seen Caberfae's[1] hearse pass. I trust they will send it by sea, for on land the journey must be fearful at this season. There is something very melancholy in seeing the body pass, poorly attended, and in the midst of a snow-storm whitening all the sable ornaments of the undertaker, and all corresponding with the decadence and misfortunes of the family.

Adieu. I hope soon to see you in Portland Place, and to find Mrs. Morritt quite strong and revived by her abode on the seaside.—Ever yours most truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

[1] Francis Lord Seaforth, last baron of Kintail.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

EDINBURGH, *January* 31, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have been rather unwell with a cold, and the severity of the weather prevented Siddons from coming to see me, but I wrote to him immediately on receiving your letter, and received the following answer, which prepares you for a letter from the manager himself. I had also to negotiate a proposal with him about Kean coming down here, to which the beginning of the letter alludes. I have not the least doubt that Siddons will be most anxious to bring forward the *Beacon*,[1] though I am afraid he is not at present very well supported by a company. I shall not, however, say much of this matter, having been at the theatre only once this season: but I have no doubt that the merits of the piece will triumphantly carry it through any defects of the performers. I am glad the *Lord of the Isles* found his way to Hampstead, and was fortunate enough to give you amusement. I have often wish'd you would take the Bruce for hero of a drama: he is an uncommon fine fellow, and we have a much better and clearer account of him than of most historical heroes.

You will readily, I think, acquit me of the most distant wish to add another to the order of fiddling, rhyming, and painting knights, an order of chivalry for which I never have had particular respect. I am of Mrs. Page's opinion: "These knights will hack." I will not change the article of my gentry. I take it, the world would say, with Falstaff, "I like not such *grinning* honour as Sir Walter hath." As for Walter, poor fellow, I hope he will marry for love and work for money. I should certainly be pleased that my daughter-in-law had some little property or fortune to help the *ménage*, but I think it is by far the least important consideration. Frugality and domestic affection make

[1] A serious musical drama on Hope.—See *Plays on the Passions*, vol. iii.

a much better fortune than that of a second Miss Tilney Long, supposing the possessor deficient in these qualities. It makes the husband's industry the labour of love, and the happiest marriages I have seen have been those which began under circumstances which required economy.[1]

We still keep our purpose of being in town to burnish the chain of friendship, as the Indians say, and particularly the valuable tie which connects us with Hampstead. Sophia will be delighted to be your honoured guest for a few days, and I will be charmed with the opportunity of making her acquainted with you. Charlotte joins in kind remembrances to Mrs. A. Baillie and Mrs. Dr. Baillie. And I am, very truly and affectionately yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

EDINR., *15th February* 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—. . . I shall be very curious to see Moore's poem.[2] His songs are most of them exquisitely beautiful, and he seems almost to think in music, the notes and words are so happily suited to each other. He is certainly a man of very considerable poetical talent, but I think has not been very fortunate in being so much in fashionable life, where a man who frequents it without fortune or rank is very apt to lose his time without adding to his reputation. I am very glad his poem is likely to fix his independence. As for the *Lord of the Isles*, it has done very well indeed; the people are tearing the printer to pieces for the next edition. Your copy was sent the day after the Prince's, to whom I thought it necessary to send one. I think it went under Mr. Freeling or Mr. Croker's frank. One went to Lady Stafford at the same time and

[1] Scott's reasons for changing his mind on the baronetcy are given in his letter to Joanna Baillie, December 1818, *Life*, vol. vi. p. 13.

[2] Lalla Rookh had just been purchased for 3000 guineas, though it was not published until 1817.

arrived safe. I trust you have yours long since. We have almost settled our expedition to London in the course of next month. I shall be much delighted to see some of the friends there to whom I have been such a stranger for six years. My first thoughts will of course turn to St. James' Square.

I spoke to Mr. Thomson about the picture. He did not like it, it seems, and is doing another. I wish he may be as successful as in one he presented me with, which is really, and without any allowance being required, a very fine thing indeed. It is a view of Crichton Castle, near Edinburgh, once a favourite haunt of mine, but not slavishly correct as to the surrounding landscape.

We have Salt, the Abyssinian traveller, here just now, a remarkably pleasant conversible man if I can judge from one interview. He corroborated my old acquaintance Bruce in all his material facts, although he thinks that he considerably exaggerated his personal consequence and exploits, and interpolated much of what regards his voyage in the Red Sea. He is to dine with me on Thursday. Does your Ladyship think it would be an acceptable compliment to present the beef without roasting, according to the fashion of the court of Gondar?

The Duke of Buccleuch is as well as a man can be under the dreadful dispensation which it has been his lot to endure. I have been much with him and have great occasion to admire both his firmness of mind and depth of feeling. He is fortunate in Lady Anne Scott, his eldest daughter, who is really worthy of the excellent mother she has lost, and whom I have often heard call her "her comfortable daughter." She is now a real comfort to her father, and discharges the duties incumbent upon her as head of his family with the utmost propriety. But Dalkeith, and still more, Bowhill, will be long places of sad and solemn recollection to all who remember the late excellent Duchess.

I have a better apology for writing an unintelligible letter than the bad pen which your Ladyship pleaded, and which I should never have discovered unless you had told me of it, for I have the whole bustle of a law court going on about my ears at this moment with "Mr. Scott, will you let me look at that process?" and "Mr. Scott, will you be so good as to touch Mr. Hume to speak to the Lord President?" etc. etc. etc. So I believe I had better stop in good time before I write absolute nonsense. Wherever I am for the time, I cannot cease to be your Ladyship's truly attached and most faithful and obliged friend,

WALTER SCOTT.

I have got a most beautiful drawing of Pitt, from Hoppner's fine painting. It is in India ink and really looks as if it could speak. I am delighted that Lawrence likes the *Lord of the Isles*. I would rather please one man of feeling and genius than all the great critics in the kingdom.

TO THE SAME.

CORNER OF WHITEHORSE STREET, PICCADILLY, *Tuesday*, [LONDON, *April* 1815].[1]

MY DEAR LADY ABERCORN,—I have been here these three or four days, always hoping, trusting, and expecting that your Ladyship would be in town. But your house in St. James' Square is otherwise occupied, and I cannot learn whether or when you are likely to be in town, though your Ladyship will believe I am most anxious to pay my respects.

Mrs. Scott and Sophia are with me, and we came up

[1] *Guy Mannering* was published in February, and as soon as the Courts rose Scott went to London, but before starting he had learned from Morritt what he thought of the book.

. . . "We have read as far as the end of the second volume and are quite delighted. I feel quite charmed with the Dominie, Meg Merrilies and Dirk Hatteraick, characters as true to nature and as original and forcibly conceived as I had almost said could be drawn by Shakespeare himself." . . .

by sea very successfully and even pleasantly, bating three circumstances—

1st. That the wind was in constant and methodical opposition.

2nd. That a collier brig ran foul of us in the dark, and nearly consigned us all to the bottom of the sea.

3rd. and last, we struck on a rock, and lay hammering for two hours until we floated with the rising tide.

I am tied down to this town just now as *l'homme de confiance* of a fair Scotchwoman who is about to be married into your high circle, and so we are up to the ears in settlements, etc., but for which circumstance I would have offered my personal respects at the Priory. I beg to be respectfully remembered to the Marquis, and am ever, with the greatest respect and regard, your Ladyship's truly faithful and obliged, WALTER SCOTT.

FROM THOMAS SCOTT.

[POSTMARK, *July 15th*, 1815.]

MY DEAR BROTHER WALTER,—I yesterday received your letter of the 9th December last, for such is the slowness of conveyance here that many months sometimes elapse between the dates of writing and receiving letters, and sometimes they do not come to hand at all, as was the case with your letter of the 30th September last. The first account I received of it and *Waverley* is contained in your last letter. This vexes me much, as both letter and book must have fallen into bad hands, or they would have been forwarded by this time. . . .

I am here at present for a few days on leave, as my time was short, the roads scarcely passable. I ran the risk of finding the ice open, and proceeded in a canoe with my father and two of my red brethren down the St. Lawrence. We had a prosperous voyage, and paddled ninety miles from sunrise to sunset—shooting all the

rapids in a style that would surprise any person unacquainted with the dexterity of the Indians. This favour I acquired from my situation amongst my tribe, being a Mohawk chief and warrior by adoption, under the name of Assarapa. In truth, my intercourse with the Indians was the only thing from which I received any pleasure at Cornwall. Their settlement at St. Ridac and on the islands was nearly opposite to Cornwall, and I preferred the manners of the native Indians to the insipid conversation of our own officers. . . .

FROM THE SAME.

No Date.

. . . YESTERDAY morning Captain Norton, the chief of the Five Nations, left. I had the pleasure to be his intimate acquaintance, and he is a man who makes you almost wish to be an Indian chief. What do you think of a man speaking the language of about twelve Indian nations, English, French, German, and Spanish, all well, being in possession of all modern literature—having read with delight your *Lady of the Lake,* and translated the same, together with the Scriptures, into Mohawk—having written a history of the five nations, and a journal of his own travels,[1] now in London ready for publication, and being at the same time an Indian chief, living as they do and following all their fashions. For, brother, you ask doth he paint himself, scalp, etc. etc.? I answer yea, he doth; and with the most polished manner of civilised life, he would not disdain to partake of the blood of his enemy at the banquet of sacrifice. Yet I admire and love the man, and would cheerfully give fifty guineas that you could see him for one half-hour. He is afraid that the *Edinburgh Review* will be hard on his book. I promised to write to

[1] The "Travels" here referred to do not appear to have been published, but for an account of Norton's translation of the Gospel of St. John into Mohawk see *Quarterly Review*, vol. xxxvi. pp. 9-11.

you to have it reviewed in the *Quarterly*. It surely is a strange circumstance that an Indian Chief should produce a literary child. . . .

TO JOHN RICHARDSON.

ABBOTSFORD, 15*th July* 1815.

I AM going to give your unwearied good-nature a bit of trouble. I have determined to take a trip to Paris, *viâ* Brussels, to see this grand finale. My companions are young Alexr. Pringle of Whytbank, and Robert Bruce, Advocate. I understand we shall want passports, and am uncertain whether they can be had without coming to London, which would be a horrid bore; will you solve me this doubt and get the passports if they can be had? If descriptions are necessary, Robert Bruce is tall, say, 5 feet 11, brown hair, light eyes, long face, stout-made; Pringle about 5 feet 6, light hair and eyes, round face and slightly made. My own I need not add. Brussels is our first object, next Paris. I write in haste, having just taken this sudden frisk into my head, resolved to see this second Brentford.[1]

[1] Scott and his two friends, accompanied by John Scott of Gala, left Edinburgh on Friday, July 28th. As a contrast to the mode of travelling in 1893, a few notes may be given from Mr. Bruce's MS. Itinerary :—

July 28,	Left Edinburgh	at 5 A.M.		
,, 29,	,, Newcastle	for York.		
,, 30,	,, York	,, Hull.		
,, 31,	,, Hull	,, Lincoln.		Stage
Aug. 1,	,, Lincoln	,, Peterborough.		Coaches.
,, 2,	,, Peterborough	,, Cambridge.		
,, 3,	,, Cambridge	,, Harwich.		
,, 4,	,, Harwich	,, Helvoetsluys.		

(The ordinary packet had left, but a boat was hired for the party at 20 guineas.)

The travellers visited Waterloo, and proceeded to Paris, arriving there on the 15th, where they remained for several weeks.

Scott and Gala returned by way of Dieppe, London, Warwick, Kenilworth, and Rokeby, arriving at Abbotsford before the end of September. The poem on *Waterloo* was published in October, and Paul's *Letters to his Kinsfolk* in the following January.—See *Life*, vol. v. pp. 54-94.

FROM LADY LOUISA STUART.

BOTHWELL CASTLE, *October 29th*, 1815.

I COULD not write, my dear Mr. Scott, till I was thoroughly acquainted with the poem, and could at once thank you for your kindness in sending it me, and say what passages had struck me as peculiarly beautiful. First, the scene of repose at the beginning, and all down to the awful conclusion of No. 7. Then the magnificent metaphor in No. 13[1] is one of those happy expressions that with a single word fill the whole mind beyond what entire pages could do. The following address to Buonaparte appears to me admirable from one end to the other. Nos. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 not the less so for steering clear of invective and abuse. But the winter torrent crowns everything. Is not that thought quite new?[2] I have been trying to recollect whether I ever saw the image thus applied anywhere else, and I cannot be sure. If not, you are a lucky man, for I must say it approaches sublimity. To conclude, I could scarcely stand No. 20, when Lady Douglas read it aloud to us, nor did I find it less affecting when I read it afterwards to myself. These are my honest opinions, just as I should give them to any third person: and let me fairly add that I by no means expected to be so much pleased. Whatever subject draws universal attention, sets "every goose a-cackling," every newspaper declaiming, descanting, admiring, lamenting, exaggerating, is harder for a poet to handle than Swift's

[1] [Then Wellington! thy piercing eye
This crisis caught of destiny—
The British host had stood
That morn 'gainst charge of sword and lance
As their own ocean-rocks hold stance,
But when thy voice had said "Advance!"
They were their ocean's flood.]

[2] ["And art thou he of Lodi's bridge,
Marengo's field, and Wagram's ridge!
Or is thy soul like mountain-tide,
That, swell'd by winter storm and shower,
Rolls down in turbulence of power,
A torrent fierce and wide;
Reft of these aids, a rill obscure,
Shrinking unnoticed, mean and poor,
Whose channel shows display'd
The wrecks of its impetuous course,
But not one symptom of the force
By which these wrecks were made!"]

broom-stick itself; and I protest I thought Waterloo such a hopeless one, that I was almost vexed at your undertaking it. But you have wonderfully avoided commonplace, and accordingly you will perhaps be criticised for not dwelling upon this and that, which people know they saw particularly mentioned in the gazette.

I shall not make my letter long, as you have something better to do than to read compliments, and it is food with which you may well be surfeited. Only a word to explain the little scrap of paper enclosed. You must know that I was in former days a kind of favourite with a certain lady, now of *Würtemberg*; and last year, being urged to write to her by a person who pretended to be sure that she would like to hear from any of the companions of her youth, after living so long debarred from all intercourse with England, I took it into my head to send her the song upon Mr. Pitt's anniversary, beginning—

> "O dread was the hour and more dreadful the omen
> When the brave on Marengo lay slaughtered in vain."

Not because she loved poetry when I knew her: she had far the best quiet sense of them all, but the Gods had made none poetical. However, she dearly loved her poor father, whom she resembled in many points of character, and she was his comfort and darling; therefore I thought that one stanza of the song, very gratifying even to my feelings, would shed balm upon her heart. And you will see by what I have transcribed of her answer, that I did not think wrong, or take too great a liberty.

I hope my nephew, the ambassador to Paris, had an opportunity of making acquaintance with you while you were there. As soon as I knew you were going abroad, I charged him to try for it, and in his answer he said how glad the Duke of Wellington would be to see you. I wish there were any chance of your coming hither, that we might talk over many matters comfortably. Did not you

say something of Christmas possibly? I long for "Paul" to his kinsfolk, with which you have something to do, I understand; and yet more for the "Antiquary," whatever fountain that and its brother streams may flow from. Bad news, alas! of poor Mrs. Morritt; to my extreme disappointment, for I hoped she was getting the better of her wearying complaints; yet by Mr. Morritt's letter last week she had begun to mend again, and was better than when you called at Rokeby.

Will you remember me very kindly to Mrs. Scott, and to my young friend Sophia, and ever believe me, your much obliged and sincere, L. STUART.

[Indorsed by Scott, "This applause is worth having."]

TO LADY LOUISA STUART.

28th Nov. 1815.

DEAR LADY LOUISA,—I need hardly say that your applause is always gratifying to me, but more particularly so when it encourages me to hope I have got tolerably well out of a hazardous scrape. The Duke of Wellington himself told me there was nothing so dreadful as a battle *won* excepting only a battle *lost*. And lost or won, I can answer for it, they are almost as severe upon the bard who celebrates as the warrior who fights them. But I had committed myself in the present case, and like many a hot-headed man, had got into the midst of the fray without considering well how I was to clear myself out of it. The approbation of your royal correspondent[1] is very flattering, because it flows from those feelings which one naturally wishes to touch and to awaken. Paul,[2] for whom I was but partially responsible, is to fall

[1] "I had sent his song for the meeting of the Pitt Club (containing that stanza, 'Nor forget his grey head,' etc.), to the Queen Dowager of Würtemberg, and wrote him word how much she was pleased with it."—LADY STUART'S note to transcript.

[2] *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, published January 1816.

upon my entire shoulders. But it would have required Briareus, or Briars as my little boy just now called him (I suppose thinking of his claws rather than his hands), to get handsomely through all I have been doing since I came home. In the first place, there was the *Battle*, with several smaller pieces which I intend to print with the *Vision of Don Roderick*, of which I will send your Ladyship a copy when I get to town. *Et puis*—but that is a great secret, there is a second volume in the press, by the author of *Triermain*. A strange piece of work it is, I promise you, being called and entitled *Harold the Dauntless*, a sort of tale of errantry and magic which, *entre nous*, I am very fond of, though ashamed to avow my frailty. When I get to town I will send the first canto under the seal of secrecy. Besides, as each great painting has its original sketch, I have given the *Edinburgh Annual Register* some lines on the Battle of Waterloo called the *Dance of Death*, a hurly-burly sort of performance; so I leave you to guess, my dear Lady Louisa, if I could form any other designs upon the public at present. If you ask me *why* I do these things, I would be much at a loss to give a good answer. I have been tempted to write for fame, and there have been periods when I have been compelled to write for money. Neither of these motives now exists—my fortune, though moderate, suffices my wishes, and I have heard so many blasts from the trumpet of Fame, both good and evil, that I am hardly tempted to solicit her notice anew. But the habit of throwing my ideas into rhyme is not easily conquered, and so, like Dogberry, I go on bestowing my tediousness upon the public. . . .

TO MORRITT.

ABBOTSFORD, *2nd November* 1815.

MY DEAREST MORRITT,—The enclosed affair would have reached you long since but for a little bustle attending

Mrs. Scott's going into Edinburgh, which lett me for some days without a domestic. It is not so good as I wish it; but after repeated trials it is as good as I can make it, and my friends here seem satisfied enough. I have another copy for you, with a new edition of *Don Roderick*, and some additional trifles. In one respect these matters have answered well; for since I acquired possession of some of my copyrights, and adhered to the plan of retaining the property in the new publications, money has tumbled in upon me very fast, and I am enabled to make a very nice little purchase adjoining to Abbotsford, which will cost about £3000. I know it will do your kind heart good to know I am increasing my territories on Tweedside, and at so easy a rate. You who gave me so easy a shove when I was pinched with my long-dated bills, will I know rejoice that your friendship has not been throwing water into a sieve. The place is at present a sort of Kamtschatka, but marches along with my own, and has capabilities especially for planting and forming grass parks, which let here very high.

I shall soon (ascending to Parnassus from Mossknow) send you a little 2nd vol. to *Triermain* called *Harold the Dauntless*, an odd sort of tale which I have taken into my fancy to write, for indulgence of a certain propensity to the marvellous which I think you share with me. I have written it rather roughly, but *con amore*, and I believe it will amuse you. Above all, I hope these trifles will find Mrs. Morritt well enough to take some interest in them, which would give them so high a value in the eyes of the author. I learn from Lady Louisa that Mrs. M. is a good deal better, and hope most sincerely the information is accurate. We think often and anxiously about you by our fireside. It is now comparatively lonely, as Mrs. Scott is gone in to the great musical festival, and Sophia attends her. Now, like Jeremy, I have an indifferent good ear for a jig, but your

solos and sonatas give me the spleen,[1] so I e'en remained behind to prune my oaks—now dwarfs—into such shapes as may become them when they shall be giants. Then I shall have such a piece of work lining out my new plantations and enclosures, and selecting trees at the Selkirk and Melrose nurseries. In short I persuaded myself I was better here. Walter is shooting wild ducks, partridges, and hares most manfully; though rather young to carry a gun yet, as he is very stout and manly of his age, I have given him a long and strong Spanish barrelled fowling-piece, which will not burst should he load it to the muzzle, and is too long for him to shoot himself unless absolutely by *malice prepense*. He generally brings in some game, and will not derogate from his forefathers, who were excellent horsemen and good sportsmen in their day.

Adieu! remember me most kindly to Mrs. Morritt, and pray let me know the first spare moment how you both do.[2]—Ever most truly yours, WALTER SCOTT.

TO THE SAME.

EDINR. 28*th Novr.* 1815.

MY DEAR MORRITT,—It was with melancholy satisfaction—but still with satisfaction—that I received your letter. To know from yourself that you are well in health

[1] Congreve's *Love for Love*, Act ii. sc. 1.

[2] The following note prepared Scott for the intimation of Mrs. Morritt's death, which reached him a few days later :—

ROKEBY, *Nov. 6th*, 1815.

MY DEAR SCOTT,—Your letter and your kindness are a cordial to a poor sinking wretch like me, at an hour when I wanted comfort. Mrs. Morritt is very very ill, and a few days must, I fear, for ever close my hopes and her sufferings. I cannot write more now; my mind is indeed torn and harassed, though my health has been supported under all I suffer more than I could hope. I trust I can bear what God inflicts, but indeed it is very bitter to me whose only object in life for years has been her happiness and health, and mine were all centred there. God bless you. Ever kindly and affectionately yours,

J. B. S. MORRITT.

and resigned in your affliction to the will of heaven is all I could have hoped to hear.

Our social affections are given us to animate our duties while we are here, and their objects are withdrawn from us that we may be taught to reflect that this transitory scene is not our resting-place. If yours, my dear friend, are now so severely wounded, your present suffering is in proportion to the domestic happiness which you have enjoyed for many years. And thus even the excess of your calamity carries with it a motive for resignation. I am happy to hear that you have with you a friend upon whose affection you can rely, and confide securely in that strong sense of duty which forms so marked a point in your character, that you will shortly find in active exertion some relief from the intensity of your present feelings. It is needless to say how deeply Mrs. Scott and my young people sympathise in your distress, honoured as they were by the kindness of the excellent person whom you lament. It is no small satisfaction to me as a father to see with what warmth my children retain remembrance of these circumstances.

Lady Hood is here just now, and I left her yesterday shedding many tears over her own family distresses and yours. It occurred to us both that some time hence, and before you are obliged to go up to Parliament, you might find mental relief by spending some time in this place. I would find you comfortable lodgings very near me, so that you would have a sort of home of your own, while I hope you would live as much in family with me as possible, and we live so very quietly that you would feel yourself under no constraint. Your advice too and assistance would be of the most material consequence to Lady Hood, and I know that holding out a prospect of serving a friend is to you always the most powerful motive that can be proposed. I propose this as a plan not to be immediately executed,

but to be kept in view when your inclinations prompt, and your business permits you to leave Rokeby. Do think of this, and if possible, bring Mr. Meyrick down with you; we will love him for your sake, and learn to do so for his own. I am sensible that at first you will feel repugnance at the idea of seeking to divert your thoughts by exterior objects from the feelings which now wholly occupy them, and which will long hold the upper part in your mind. But it is our duty, as early as human frailty will permit, to hold ourselves open to such consolations as we may receive from change of place and of objects, and although we at first feel constrained and hurt by such a change, yet the exertions which it naturally requires become gradually their own reward.

Mrs. Scott begs her kindest and most affectionate remembrances, and I am ever, my dear Morritt, but more especially at the present moment, yours most truly and kindly, WALTER SCOTT.

CHAPTER XII

1816

EDINBURGH AND ASHESTIEL

The herring loves the merry moonlight,
  The mackerel loves the wind,
But the oyster loves the dredging sang,
  For they come of a gentle kind.

Now haud your tongue, baith wife and carle,
  And listen, great and sma',
And I will sing of Glenallan's Earl
  That fought on the Red Harlaw.

Elspeth's Ballad—*Antiquary.*

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1816—AGE 45

Death of brother, Major John Scott, 8th May.

Scott visits Perthshire and Dumbarton—a family party—in August.

Morritt's visit to Abbotsford in September.

Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk, published by Constable in January.

The Antiquary, 3 vols., published by Constable in May.

History of Europe for 1814, in *Edinburgh Annual Register*, October.

Tales of my Landlord, 1st series; *Black Dwarf*, and *Old Mortality*, 4 vols., published by Murray and Blackwood, December 1.

Contributions to *Quarterly Review*—

Culloden Papers, No. 28, January.

Byron's Childe Harold, canto iii. No. 31, October—January.

CHAPTER XII.

TO ADAM FERGUSON.

EDIN., 12*th March* 1816.

MY DEAR ADAM,—I received yours yesterday, and highly applaud your resolution to hang the trumpet in the hall and study war no more. . . . I have had often a delightful vision about you. You must know I have added to Abbotsford a good large farm, on which there is a mansion about the calibre of the *Laird's ain house*, or rather larger, commanding a most beautiful prospect of the Eildon hills and Melrose, or where, as the poet has it—

> "Soft sleeps the mist on cloven Eildon laid,
> And distant Melrose peeps from leafy shade."

. . . Now your sisters and you might comfortably inhabit this mansion during summer, and it would be admirable shooting quarters, near enough to us and others to be quite sociable, and distant enough to be perfectly independent. This is a plan for future consideration, but it affords us a prospect of laying our auld grey pows together, as we used to do our young rattlepates. The house will only cost you paying the window-tax (about 50 shillings), and if you want a paddock for a cow and horse you shall be handsomely dealt by. I hope you will keep this in your recollection when you think of a summer settlement. The Blucher flying coach sets you down within half-an-hour's walk of the spot. There is an old man in the place whom I will not disturb for a year or so, so we will have enough time to think of it. At all events we will see you at Abbotsford this summer, and I trust you will like Kaeside. . . .

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

ABBOTSFORD, 12*th April* 1816.

. . . I HAVE added a most romantic inmate to my family —a large bloodhound, allow'd to be the finest dog of the kind in Scotland, perfectly gentle, affectionate, and good-natured, and the darling of all the children. I had him in a present from Glengarry,[1] who has refused the breed to people of the very first rank. He is between the deer-greyhound and mastiff, with a shaggy mane like a lion, and always sits beside me at dinner, his head as high as the back of my chair; yet it will gratify you to know that a favourite cat keeps him in the greatest possible order, and insists upon all rights of precedence, and scratches with impunity the nose of an animal who would make no bones of a wolf, and pulls down a red deer without fear or difficulty. I heard my friend set up some most piteous howls, and I assure you the noise was no joke, all occasioned by his fear of passing puss, who had stationed himself on the stairs.[2] . . .

[1] Glengarry's note may now be given :—

GARRY COTTAGE, 3*d March* 1816.

MY DEAR SIR,—We returned the length of Kinross on Friday, and got home yesterday. I wished much to have seen you again relative to the dogs. I have a cross much admired, which generally attend my carriage. They can travel without inconvenience with any horse, and make famous watch-dogs. Their sire was the sheep-dog called the "Blue Dog of Spain" that kills the wolf and preserves their valuable flocks from bears; their dam the genuine Highland deer-hound, which race I have maintained likewise in perfect purity. Should you mean that cross, and say so by letter how soon you read this (I will get your favour by the post of Tuesday evening, the last that can overtake me here), he shall be in your possession on Thursday first. His name is Maida, out of respect for that action in which my brother had the honour to lead the 78th Highlanders to victory. This dog is now in his prime, and has been bled to deer and roe, and should you wish for more of the deer blood for yourself command me freely.—I remain, dear sir, always yours obliged and very truly, A. MACDONELL.

[2] Nimrod, Maida's successor, was not so forbearing with Hinse.—See *Journal*, vol. ii. p. 273, note.

TO SOUTHEY.

ABBOTSFORD, 17*th April* 1816.

. . . IT would have been indeed a meeting to have had your company on the field of Waterloo; the most decisive as well as the most glorious victory which was ever gained, and in the most just cause. I do not know whether I admired most the skill of the general, or the persevering and enduring bravery of the troops whom he led on that memorable day, but between them they proved the truth of what we have often agreed upon as a leading principle, that for victory, it was only necessary to place British troops under a general in whom they had deserved confidence. Had this been done from the first, what seas of blood might have been spared! . . . The Duke of Wellington fairly fought himself into the confidence of the public and the administrators of the public. The difficulties which he encountered in his outset would fill a volume, and I cannot help thinking the better of myself, that though totally unknown to Sir Arthur Wellesley, and only judging of him from the spirit of decision with which he conducted the Indian campaigns, I considered him long before the defence of Lisbon, and in spite of the Convention of Cintra, as the only man we could send forth to meet Bonaparte. . . . I do not know how much you have lost by not seeing the Duchess of Richmond, for my own acquaintance with her is as slight as possible, but I know many of her and his intimate friends. She gave me an interesting account of her ball, which was broken up in so particular a manner.[1]

I should have liked to have gone through Flanders, and yet hope to do so. There is something in the character of the Walloons (not to mention their resemblance in figure and features to the Scotch) which greatly in-

[1] Scott saw the Duchess when in Brussels in August 1815.

terested me, and one cannot forget that Froissart, the most picturesque of historians, and Philip de Comines, perhaps the most faithful, both came from Flanders, and that a thousand memorable actions have rendered the land classic; they are besides a good people, and have some faith and honesty left among them, much different in that respect from their neighbours, the French, whose sense of religion and morality is down at zero. . . . I hope you will contrive a border excursion this next summer, and bring Mrs. Southey with you to this least of all possible houses, which however has a poet's corner for you and her. Think of this and oblige him who is always truly yours, Walter Scott.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

[*End of April* 1816.]

My dear Friend,—I am glad you are satisfied with my reasons for declining a direct interference with Lord B[yron]. I have not, however, been quite idle, and as an old seaman have tried to go by a side wind when I had not the means of going before it, and this will be so far plain to you when I say that I have every reason to believe the good intelligence is true that a separation is signed between Lord and Lady Byron. If I am not as angry as you have good reason to expect every thinking and feeling man to be, it is from deep sorrow and regret that a man possessed of such noble talents should so utterly and irretrievably lose himself. In short, I believe the thing to be as you state it, and therefore Lord Byron is the object of anything rather than indignation. It is a cruel pity that such high talents should have been joined to a mind so wayward and incapable of seeking control where alone it is to be found, in the quiet discharge of domestic duties and filling up in peace and affection his station in society. The idea of his ultimately resisting that which should be

fair and honourable to Lady B. did not come within my view of his character—at least of his natural character; but I hear that, as you intimated, he has had execrable advisers. I hardly know a more painful object of consideration than a man of genius in such a situation; those of lower minds do not feel the degradation, and become like pigs, familiarised with the filthy elements in which they grovel; but it is impossible that a man of Lord Byron's genius should not often feel the want of that which he has forfeited—the fair esteem of those by whom genius most naturally desires to be admired and cherished.

I am much obliged to Mrs. Baillie for excluding me in her general censure of authors; but I should have hoped for a more general spirit of toleration from my good friend, who had in her own family and under her own eye such an exception to her general censure—unless, indeed (which may not be far from the truth), she supposes that female genius is more gentle and tractable, though as high in tone and spirit as that of the masculine sex. But the truth is, I believe, we will find a great equality when the different habits of the sexes and the temptations they are exposed to are taken into consideration. Men early flattered and coaxed, and told they are fitted for the higher regions of genius and unfit for anything else,—that they are a superior kind of automaton and ought to move by different impulses than others,—indulge their friends and the public with freaks and caprioles like those of that worthy knight of La Mancha in the Sierra Morena. And then, if our man of genius escapes this temptation, how is he to parry the opposition of the blockheads who join all their hard heads and horns together to butt him out of the ordinary pasture, goad him back to Parnassus, and "bid him on the barren mountain starve."[1] It is amazing how far this goes, if a man will let it go, in turning him out of the ordi-

[1] Varied from First *Henry* IV., Act i. sc. 3.

nary course of life into the stream of odd bodies, so that authors come to be regarded as tumblers, who are expected to go to church in a summerset, because they sometimes throw a Catherine-wheel for the amusement of the public. A man even told me at an election, thinking I believe he was saying a severe thing, that I was a poet, and therefore that the subject we were discussing lay out of my way. I answered as quietly as I could, that I did not apprehend my having written poetry rendered me incapable of speaking common sense in prose, and that I requested the audience to judge of me not by the nonsense I might have [written for] their amusement, but by the sober sense I was endeavouring to speak for their information, and only expected them, in case I had ever happened to give any of them pleasure, in a way which was supposed to require some information and talent, they would not, for that sole reason, suppose me incapable of understanding or explaining a point of the profession for which I had been educated. So I got a patient and very favourable hearing. But certainly these great exertions of friends and enemies have forced many a poor fellow out of the common paths of life, and obliged him to make a trade of what can only be gracefully executed as an occasional avocation. When such a man is encouraged in all his freaks and follies, the bit is taken out of his mouth, and, as he is turned out upon the common, he is very apt to deem himself exempt from all the rules incumbent on those who keep the king's highway. And so they play fantastic tricks before high heaven.

The lady authors are not exempt from these vagaries, being exposed to the same temptations; and all I can allow Mrs. Baillie in favour of the fair sex is that since the time of the Aphras and Orindas of Charles II.'s time, the authoresses have been ridiculous only, while the authors have too often been both absurd and vicious. As to our leal friend Tom Campbell, I have heard stories of his

morbid sensibility chiefly from the Minto family, with whom he lived for some time, and I think they all turned on little foolish points of capricious affectation, which perhaps had no better foundation than an ill-imagined mode of exhibiting his independence. But whatever I saw of him myself—and we were often together, and sometimes for several days—was quite composed and manly. Indeed, I never worried him to make him get on his hind legs and spout poetry when he did not like it. He deserves independence well; and if the dog which now awakens him to the recollection of his possessing it, happened formerly to disturb the short sleep that drowned his recollection of so great a blessing, there is good reason for enduring the disturbance with more patience than before.

But surely, admitting all our temptations and irregularities, there are men of genius enough living to restrain the mere possession of talent from the charge of disqualifying the owner for the ordinary occupation and duties of life. There never were better men, and especially better husbands, fathers, and real patriots, than Southey and Wordsworth; they might even be pitched upon as most exemplary characters. I myself, if I may rank myself in the list, am, as Hamlet says, indifferent honest, and at least not worse than an infidel in loving those of my own house. And I think that generally speaking, authors like actors, being rather less commonly believed to be eccentric than was the faith fifty years since, do conduct themselves as amenable to the ordinary rules of society.

This tirade was begun a long time since, but is destined to be finished at Abbotsford. Your bower is all planted with its evergreens, but must for seven years retain its original aspect of a gravel pit.[1] . . .

[rest lost.]

[1] Joanna Baillie replies:—

". . . I thank you for your last kind letter, and have been somewhat amused at your taking up so

TO MORRITT.

No Date.

. . . I AM very sorry for what has taken place between Lord Byron and his Lady, for I was in great hopes that the comfort of domestic society might tame the wayward irregularity of mind which is, unfortunately for its owner, connected with such splendid talent. I have known Lord Byron do very great and generous things, and I would have been most happy to find that he had adopted other and more settled habits. But I should be afraid that is hardly to be hoped for now, for the very circumstances of *éclat* which have attended the separation will prevent them ever uniting again, for such breaches made up are like a china dish clasped, it has an appearance of union but has lost its value, and must always be precarious and insecure. . . .

TO TERRY.

EDINBURGH, 19*th May* 1816.

DEAR TERRY,—I would not have been so long in thanking you for your kind intentions towards me, and expressing my cheerful wish to stand Godfather to the little heathen, had it not been that a long illness of my brother Major Scott, has been recently closed by his death, which, with the necessary arrangements which devolved on me, has occupied my time for some days past. You remember his health was always weak, and it was a matter of surprise to us all how he got through the winter.

seriously the defence of the whole brotherhood and sisterhood of poets against the charge of eccentricity and selfishness. Mrs. B.'s remark was made in an untoward hour, and we will not maintain it in all points. That most extraordinary poet who gave occasion for it is now gone abroad, and will, I hope, return no more. The separation was signed before he went. After drawing back and refusing to sign it on various pretences, fear, that powerful agent! was supposed to prevail on him at last. Lady B., poor thing! will now, I hope, have some peace. She has the advantage of having now no contrary or divided affection to contend with, for she can feel nothing for him now but unmixed aversion and disgust. . . ."

The separation, however, is always a shock when it comes, cutting up by the roots many an old domestic remembrance, which must now be forgotten because there is no longer an individual with whom they can be communicated. But the old and infirm must make room for those who are entering upon the stage, and I sincerely congratulate you upon having acquired a new tie to existence with all the duties connected with it. In giving my name to the little fellow, see you do not add an L to your own. Walter Terry*l* would be a most ominous sound. I hope Mrs. Terry continues to do as well as you can wish, and will soon be up and busy. I have safely received the play,[1] music, etc.: the scenes seem to hang much more closely together than in the original sketch, and it is on the whole incalculably improved. The songs are very good. I would have you make no alterations in the plates for the music. I have arranged with Campbell so that "Rest thee, babe" will not in any shape interfere with the way in which they now stand. I hope you have safely received a certain novel in three volumes.[2] It is at press again, 6000 having been sold in six days. . . . W. S.

TO THOMAS SCOTT.

29th May 1816.

My dear Tom,—. . . [Statement of T. S.'s interest in Major Scott's Estate.] This seems of particular consequence with respect to little Walter because, of course, though it may be very difficult for me to be useful to you, it is quite different the power of forwarding a young man's views on entering into life, and if he proves what we both would wish and hope, he can hardly select a line of life in which I could not be directly or indirectly of some service to him. There is a possibility also (though such expecta-

[1] *Guy Mannering*, dramatised by Terry, was put upon the London stage in March 1816, but was not performed at Edinburgh until February 1817.

[2] *The Antiquary.*

tions are of all others the most contingent) that my children may be much wealthier than I, in which case I would naturally wish to do something for yours, which I could do without injustice to my own. So that for every reason I would prefer your returning here, were it not for the limited income with which you now have to struggle. With between £300 and £400 a year economy may doubtless live without running into debt. And without consuming the capital, the interest joined to your annuity will amount at least to that sum, independent of what property you have remaining in the Isle of Man.

. . . Times here are not good, but mending. The farmers have been half ruined by the sudden fall of the value of produce, but I think it is now rising. In fact, great part of the panic was owing to the sudden and general retrenchment of the Bank credit throughout Scotland. The farmer who used to carry a bill to the Bank to pay his rent, was suddenly obliged to send his stock and crop to market, instead of that convenient representative of his wealth, "Please to pay," and so forth. Where there were so many sellers, buyers turned shy, and money became daily scarcer. But things are coming round again, after much individual distress. . . . Last year I was on the Continent for the greater part of the Autumn, and was at Paris within a very short time after the battle of Waterloo. It was something new to hear the bagpipes playing before the Tuileries, and to see the Highlanders broiling on the cuirasses of the French Imperial Guards their rations of beef and mutton. The Parisians were as gay as ever, notwithstanding this recent visit of Europe in arms, and all the apparatus of cannon turned upon the celebrated Pont Neuf and Pont Royal, with matches burning and a Prussian Artilleryman at each longing for orders to fire it. My wife and family are all well, and send best love to their aunt and you. . . .

TO THE DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH.

ABBOTSFORD, *June 5th*, 1816.

MY DEAR LORD,—I have made a start of three days to this place to see the great Babylon which I have built, the bog which I have drained, or rather attempted to drain, and the trees which I have planted. Babylon I found about as broad and long as I left it, but as there is no certainty in human affairs, the bog has proved not so soft as that to which the Bard likened his dear Molly Mogg, but on the contrary hard-hearted, or in vulgar phrase, surrounded by a good stomacher of whinstone rock, and the trees, poor dear creatures! suffering under the influence of a dry cold blighting wind, which, if it lasts, will cure us of our complaints of cheap meal for one while. To recreate myself under these disappointments, I was under the necessity of accepting the honour done me by the Souters, who requested me to lay the foundation-stone of a sort of barn which is to be called a Free Masons' Hall. There was a solemn procession on this occasion, which, that it might not want the decorum of costume, was attended by weavers from Hawick, shoemakers from Jedburgh, and pedlars from Peebles, all very fine in the scarfs and trinkums of their respective lodges. If our musical band was not complete, it was at least varied, for besides the town drum and fife, which thundered in the van, we had a pair of bagpipes and two fiddles, and we had a prayer from a parson whom they were obliged to initiate on the spur of the occasion, who was abominably frightened, although I assured him the sanctity of his cloth would preserve him from the fate of the youngest brother alluded to by Burns in his "Address to the Deil."

I wish I could by a corner of Prince Houssain's tapestry pay your Grace a visit at Bath. I resided there the sixth year of my life and have a strong recollection of the Abbey

Church, the Orange Grove, the Avon, and a statue of Neptune, which then stood at the Ferry which led to Spring Gardens. I recollect the river as dark and yellowish, at least to my northern eyes. . . . I beg to be most kindly remembered to Lady Anne and the other young ladies, the fir and heather chieftains, and all the friends around your Grace. I hope your Grace will be at Bowhill early enough in the season to make out the proposed fishing for the monster[1] at Cauldshields Loch.—Believe me, my dear Lord Duke, ever your truly honoured and obliged, Walter Scott.

TO MORRITT.

Abbotsford, 26*th August* [1816].

My dear Morritt,—I wrote you a long letter the other evening. Your plans of operation received this morning will suit me most admirably, especially if you come by Jedburgh. I must be there at the Circuit on the 14th Sept., and abide the 15th (Sunday) in my official attendance on the Judge. Now, if you sleep at Otterbourne on the 13th, which is an indifferent sort of hedge inn, you will find me at Jedburgh on the evening of the next day, and we have Sunday to look about us at Jedburgh and dine with the Judge, who is my old school-fellow and a very pleasant man; and on Monday morning, unless you should wish to take a turn towards Kelso, we will breakfast at Abbotsford. My being able to get to Harviestown depends on my getting forward some work which I have in hand, and which I will show you. But at any rate, I have plenty of time to weary you to death with showing you all that is to be seen, so I expect you will stay with me as long as you possibly can. Look over Froissart before you visit Otterbourne; the ground confirms his account of the battle wonderfully. You will of

[1] Scott's pet superstition, the Watercow.

course visit Hexham: the church is very curious, with some old Roman monuments, and the situation beautiful. Between a miserable inn called Tom-pill and Otterburne (that is supposing you come from Hexham), on a small brook near a place called Woodburn, is the curious Roman town or camp of Risingham. Near this stood the figure called Robin of Risingham, now not existing. It was mentioned in the notes to a certain poem called *Rokeby*, and acquired such celebrity that the boor on whose grounds it stood, teazed with the number of visitors, broke it to pieces.[1] . . . I do not know anything else very remarkable in that part of the road; only, on the very march when you enter Scotland, the Battle of Reidswire was fought, being the last action between the Scotch and English. From Jedburgh I hope to be your cicerone myself. I write in great haste to save post. All here send love and will be delighted to see you.—Most truly yours,

W. S.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

EDINBURGH, *Nov.* 27, 1816.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—. . . Welcome, my dear friend, to the land you honour and to the friends who love you.[2] . . . All I ever longed for on the Continent was their light wines, which you do not care about, and their fine climate, which we should both value equally; and to say truth, I never saw scene or palace which shook my allegiance to Tweedside and Abbotsford, though so inferior in every respect, and though the hills, or rather braes, are just high enough "to lift us to the storm" when the storms are not so condescending as to sweep both crest and base, which, to do them justice, is seldom the case. What have I got to send you in return for the sublime description of the Alps? Alas! nothing but the history of petty employments

[1] Scott's *Poetical Works*, vol. ix. p. 56.

[2] Mrs. Baillie had just returned from a tour on the Continent.

and a calendar of increasing bad weather. The latter was much mitigated by enjoying for a good portion of the summer the society of John Morritt, of Rokeby, who has so much of that which is delightful, both in his grave and gay moods, that he can make us forget the hill-side while sitting by the fireside. His late loss[1] has cast a general shade of melancholy over him, which renders him yet dearer to his friends, by the gentle and unaffected manner in which his natural gaiety of temper gleams through it and renders it still more interesting. . . .

A far different object of interest, yet still of interest chequered with pity and disapprobation, is Lord Byron, whose present situation seems to rival all that ever has been said and sung of the misfortunes of a too irritable imagination. The last part of *Childe Harold* intimates a terrible state of mind, and with all the power and genius which characterised his former productions, the present seems to indicate a more serious and desperate degree of misanthropy. I own I was not much moved by the scorn of the world which his first poems implied, because I know it is a humour of mind which those whom fortune has spoilt by indulgence, or irritated by reverses, are apt to assume, because it looks melancholy and gentlemanlike, and becomes a bard as well as being desperately in love, or very fond of the sunrise though he lies in bed till noon, or anxious in recommending to others to catch cold by visiting old abbeys by moonlight, which he never happened to see under the chaste moonbeam himself; but this strange poem goes much deeper, and either the Demon of Misanthropy is in full possession of him, or he has invited ten guests equally desperate, to the swept and garnished mansion of Harold's understanding. On my word of honour, I should expect it to end either in actual insanity, or something equally frightful. I am glad you have

[1] Mrs. Morritt, as already noted, died in November 1815.

contradicted the reports of his following a course of open profligacy. I wonder who can have pleasure in circulating such stories, were it not that the degradation of genius seems to give as little pain to vulgar minds, as the *plotting* a bird does to a cook, who cares little whether it be a dunghill cock or a pheasant. I would be glad to hear that Lady Byron was as well as circumstances can entitle her friends [to expect]. It is a terrible thing to be attached to the flight of such a *balloon* as Lord B., and the high interest which his writings maintain keeps him in a manner before the eyes of the public, and prevents his misfortune from dying away and being forgotten as in the ordinary case.[1]

To return to my petty affairs. I have some thoughts of enlarging Abbotsford this year, and I have got a very pretty plan which may be executed at moderate expense, having the local advantage of plenty of stones on the property. I have always had a private dislike to a regular shape of a house, although no doubt it would be very wrong-headed to set about building an irregular one from the beginning; but when the cottage enlarges itself and grows out of circumstances, which is the case at Abbotsford, the *outs* and the *ins* without afford so much variety and depth of shade, and within give such an odd variety of snug accommodation that they far exceed in my estimation the cat-lugged band-box, with four rooms on a floor and two stories rising regularly above each other. From this you will be disposed to augur something rather whimsical, and you will be perfectly right. The present mansion consists of two parts, divided from each other by an interval of about 34 feet, and I purpose the new building shall occupy this interval, and thus connect the two dwellings. There is to

[1] The third canto of *Childe Harold* had just appeared, and it impressed Scott so deeply that he wrote a criticism which he sent to Murray on January 10th for the *Quarterly Review*. Murray's *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 373. —See present volume, pp. 412-421.

be a small conservatory (think of that) and a little boudoir for my fine bust of Shakespeare, a good eating-room, and a small den for myself in particular; the ground falls so much in front that I can secure any quantity of accommodation below. Above I will have two comfortable bedrooms with dressing-closets; the front, I intend shall have some resemblance to one of the old-fashioned English halls which your gentlemen of £500 a year lived comfortably in, in former days. To augment the resemblance, I have contrived to bespeak certain canopies which at present adorn the ancient and venerated, the Tolbooth in Edinburgh, so if my building does not give me a niche in the present, at least I will get one out of it; they are finely carved, being intended for the reception of saints, and having held them, I suppose, till John Knox knock'd them down. That curious old building, the Bastile of Edinburgh, and formerly the place where the Parliament met, came down this year, and the magistrates have very politely promised me any part of the ornaments which may suit my purpose, and it will be hard if I cannot find a purpose for all that is worth carrying thirty miles.

My plantations have grown this year *like any mad*, and they are the only production which has thriven during the late uncommon season, when rain and wind was the constant order of the day: the weather has really been frightful, and its effects on the country must be serious, for much of the corn has been standing in the snow, and the potatoes have in general suffer'd exceedingly. The same measure which last year was offer'd for nine pence, and would hardly fetch that price, now fetches eighteen pence, and you know how much our peasantry trust to this excellent root. We hope, however, that things will not be so bad as we anticipated some time since. There has been a sudden and unexpected start in the price of live stock, which about a month since was depreciated in

a degree almost ruinous to the tenantry, and must have ruined many. This is of great consequence, for if the farmer is ruined, he cannot employ the labourer. Money seems also to be becoming plenty, and credit is said to be better, though no one knows very well why. The opening of the ports for importation has had a great effect in setting the looms agoing at Glasgow and elsewhere, for the continental merchants are willing enough to take our commodities, only they have no money to pay for them, unless by our buying their corn. So that I trust upon the whole, things will gradually come round again; the unnatural state of things and the distorted channels of commerce, which gradually arise out of the state of war, make a dislocation which cannot be reduced to its natural and proper state without pain and suffering. In the meantime, these are encouragements to an improver like myself for carrying on all my hobby-horsical plans, for as Uncle Toby says, "is it not in the cause of the country?" In fact, we must find the poor folks work, and if that is all they ask,—which, after all, is only diverting our superfluities to our own enjoyments, by means of their labour,—all who have the means of doing it should find them employment,—the best charity in one point of view, since it preserves the independence of the labourer's character, and is most useful in another, since the employer must derive pleasure or advantage, or both, while he essentially benefits the person employed.—Ever most truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

November, 1816.

. . . I CANNOT even conjecture who you mean by Mr. Mackenzie as author of the *Antiquary*. I should think my excellent old friend, Mr. Harry Mackenzie (author of the *Man of Feeling*, etc.), was too much advanced in years

and plunged in business to amuse himself by writing novels, and besides, the stile in no degree resembles his. I am told one of the English reviews gives these works by name, and upon alleged authority, to George Forbes, Sir William's brother. So they take them off my hands, I don't care who they [give] them to, for I am really tired of an imputation which I am under the necessity of confuting at every corner. Tom will be soon home from Canada, as the death of my elder brother has left him a little money, and he may answer for himself; but I hardly suspect him, unless much changed, to be possessed of the perseverance necessary to write *nine* volumes. . . .

. . . The only thing I have been doing of late is to write two or three songs for a poor man called Campbell, a decay'd artist and musician, who tried to teach me music many years ago. He has made an immense collection of Highland airs, and I have given him words for some of them. One of them is the only good song I ever wrote —it is a fine Highland Gathering tune called *Pibroch an Donuil Dhu*, that is, the Pibroch of Donald the Black. As your Ladyship likes scraps of minstrelsy, and I have little that is interesting to say, I add the words.[1] . . .

TO LADY LOUISA STUART.

EDINBURGH, *Nov.* 14*th*, 1816.

DEAR LADY LOUISA,—Your kind token of remembrance would not have remained so long unanswered, but for an inroad of visitors who relieved guard upon me without intermission until I left Abbotsford two days ago, and the little time which I could spare for my pen was necessarily dedicated to getting forward with the labour I had in hand, and which after all was a little, or rather not a little, interrupted. For, besides that Abbotsford affords

[1] See *Poetical Works*, vol. xi. p. 319.

no more opportunity of seclusion than one would possess in a moderate-sized lanthorn, there is a sort of pleasure in the present state of matters there to run about with every new stranger, and tell him this I have done and this do I design to do—so have things been formerly—thus they stand now, and thus seen by prophetic spectacles they will show hereafter. . . . The unfortunate guests, to be sure, pay for their beef and port with wet feet, and perhaps sore throats, when they are carried round to see nature in her primitive nakedness, and the tailors engaged in cutting out her new cloaths. But then, what came they forth to the wilderness to see? For my part, I make it a rule never to spare them either for pinch'd features, benumb'd hands, miry feet, or doleful looks, and receive all the compliments which their sad civility compels them to muster as a debt due and a thing of course. In the meantime, hours slip away, dinner comes, and we are hungry—evening, and we are lazy—night, and we are sleepy, and thus wears the world away. In the midst of all these avocations, and at the expense of neglecting the correspondence of some valued friend (among whom none can rank more highly than Lady Louisa Stuart), I have accomplished a novel, or rather four volumes of tales, chiefly that I might not ruin myself or do injustice to my family by this same rage of improving like any mad. I intended to have written four tales illustrative of the manners of Scotland in her different provinces.[1] But, as no man that wrote so much ever knew so little what he intended to do when he began to write, or executed less of the little which he had premeditated, I totally altered my plan before I had completed my first volume. I began a border tale[2] well enough, but tired of

[1] Scott dedicated the First Series of the *Tales of my Landlord* "To his loving countrymen, whether they are denominated *Men of the South, Gentlemen of the North, People of the West*, or *Folk of Fife*."

[2] *Black Dwarf*.

the ground I had trod so often before I had walked over two-thirds of the course. Besides, I found I had circumscribed my bounds too much, and, in *manége* phrase, that my imagination, not being well in hand, could not lunge easily within so small a circle. So I quarrelled with my story, and bungled up a conclusion, as a boarding-school Miss finishes a task which she had commenced with great glee and accuracy. In the next tale I have succeeded better—at least I think so. It is a covenanting story; the time lies at the era of Bothwell Brigg,[1] the scene in Lanarkshire. There are noble subjects for narrative during that period, full of the strongest light and shadow, all human passions stirr'd up and stimulated by the most powerful motives, and the contending parties as distinctly contrasted in manners and in modes of thinking as in political principles. I am complete master of the whole history of these strange times, both of persecutors and persecuted, so I trust I have come decently off, for as Falstaff very reasonably asks, is not the *truth* the *truth*? You will soon judge for yourself, as I will take care to send an early copy to Gloucester Place, conditionally that your Ladyship will have the goodness not to shew it to any one till it is regularly published in London, for it is very odd what trifles are summon'd up as articles of evidence. I will tell you when we meet what may have given rise to my brother's being named as the author of *Waverley*, etc. It is a report which, if he would avail himself of the very strong talents both of pathetic and humorous description which he really possesses (*car il y a de quoi*), he might make a very fortunate report for him. But he is one of the many many hundreds in whom indolence has strangled genius, and the habits acquired in an unsettled state of life are highly unfavourable to his ever doing anything in this way, though the state of his

[1] *Old Mortality.*

family would render it the wisest thing he could do. As for *Harold the Dauntless*, I hope soon to finish him and have him out, so as to charge horse and foot in the same month. My ostensible employment is a view of the history of Scotland, long since written, and on which I set so much value that I shall revise it with great care. Such therefore is your answer, my dear Lady Louisa, when any one asks you what your friend W. S. is about. Morritt was well, and generally speaking in good spirits when he was with us: he bears and feels his loss like a man, but he seems to have set up his rest and hope on his nephew. Now this I do not like, for the poor young lad has a consumptive habit, and the idea that our valued friend is to dedicate his time and to build his happiness on a prop so apt to fail him, seems to me rather alarming; much, much rather would I hear that he had form'd a new connection, and I am only afraid of his pronouncing himself so decidedly just now as may prevent him from thinking of it at another time. These things, however, go most especially by destiny, and to destiny let us leave them. . . . I wish I could say I think the Duke[1] well, but I do not; his spirits get above his strength, and he is cheerful and makes others so, but he looks ill in general, and I cannot look upon him without the most anxious apprehensions. Would to God he had a regular and hearty fit of the gout, for I think it flits about him in an unpleasant manner. The young ladies are really charming girls, so gentle and sensible, and fond of each other, as well as attentive to their father. Surely the family affections which Heaven has bestow'd on that family are worth all other advantages.

Adieu, my dear Lady Louisa. Mrs. Scott joins her respectful compliments, and I ever am most truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

[1] Charles, Duke of Buccleuch.

TO MORRITT.

ABBOTSFORD, 22*d November* 1816.

MY DEAR MORRITT,—I hope this will find you well recovered of all the colds and wettings which you caught in the land of mist and snow, and not quite shivering when you think of the banks of the Tweed. We have left them for two or three days, and are now safely settled in Castle Street. One of our first occupations was to unpack Shakespeare and his superb pedestal, which is positively the most elegant and appropriate piece of furniture which I ever saw. It has been the admiration of all who have seen it, and that has been half Edinburgh, for aught that I know, for its arrival has made a great sensation. . . . The figure came safe; and the more I look at it the more I feel that it must have resembled the Bard much more than any of the ordinary prints, unless it be that in the first folio edition,[1] which has all the appearance of being taken from it. The forehead is more expanded, and has not a narrow, peaked, and priggish look inconsistent with the dignity of Shakespeare's character, and which strongly marks all the ordinary portraits, which seem to me more like Spenser than Shakespeare.

But to descend from Shakespeare, his bust and cabinet, to matters of humbler import, you will receive in a day or two the *Tales of My Landlord*. The last is, I think, the best I have yet been able to execute, although written by snatches and at intervals. It is quite finished, and I expect to get copies in boards by Friday or Saturday. Yours of course will be sent among the foremost, and I will be glad to learn it reaches you safe and gives you amusement.

All things go on with us as usual. I have settled Walter tightly to his Greek and Latin, to which we add

[1] Published in 1623. Shakespeare died in 1616, and the bust in Stratford Church was placed there within seven years after his death. It is believed to have been taken from a death mask—See Winter's *Shakspeare's England*.

French, Italian, and the elements of mathematics. He goes to the *manége* thrice a week, and fences twice. With reading history and attending to geography, he will have enough to do through the winter. As for me, I bother on with my proposed addition, and I have got, since I had the benefit of your advice, that of Bullock and Mr. Blore, so that I have every chance of ruining myself genteelly. Meantime, they have ordered a new edition of the *Tales*, which will help out these mighty operations against they are set agoing. By the way, I have just received *Childe Harold*, part 3rd.[1] Lord Byron has more avowedly identified himself with his personage than upon former occasions, and in truth does not affect to separate them. It is wilder and less sweet, I think, than the first part, but contains even darker and more powerful pourings forth of the spirit which boils within him. I question whether there ever lived a man who, without looking abroad for subjects excepting as they produced an effect on himself, has contrived to render long poems turning almost entirely upon the feelings, character, and emotions of the author, so deeply interesting. We gaze on the powerful and ruined mind which he presents us, as on a shattered castle, within whose walls, once intended for nobler guests, sorcerers and wild demons are supposed to hold their Sabbaths. There is something dreadful in reflecting that one gifted so much above his fellow-creatures, should thus labour under some strange mental malady that destroys his peace of mind and happiness, altho' it cannot quench the fire of his genius. I fear the termination will be fatal in one way or other, for it seems impossible that human nature can support the constant working of an imagination so dark and so strong. Suicide or utter insanity is not

[1] On which Scott wrote the generous criticism in the 31st No. of the *Quarterly Review*. This article, as will be seen, displeased Lady Byron's friends. See *ante*, p. 371, note, and *post*, pp. 413-422.

unlikely to close the scene. "*Orandum sit*," as the sapient Partridge says, "*ut sit mens sana in corpore sano*."[1]

Our weather here has been somewhat better ever since the eclipse. The sun, I suppose, felt himself bound in honour to show that he had not been extinguished outright on Monday last, which was much to be apprehended, considering the blinking way in which he has been all summer. For my part, I would not consent to look at the eclipse at all, for the sight of the unshadowed sun would have been much the greater singularity of the two as things have gone this season. Adieu, let this sheet of nonsense only intimate that I long to hear from you, and am grateful for the kindness that gave me so much of your time at Abbotsford. I am fininishing my tale of the heathen Dane.[2] Mrs. Scott and the young folks offer respectful and affectionate remembrances, and I am ever, my dear Morritt, most truly yours, WALTER SCOTT.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

29th November [1816].

MY DEAR LADY ABERCORN,—I have been long waiting for an opportunity of writing to you with a good grace, and I think I have found one which may in some degree atone for my ungracious silence, which after all has only arisen from my having nothing to say that I thought likely to interest you. I have sent, under Mr. Arbuthnot's cover, four volumes of a novel, or rather a set of novels, which I am strongly inclined to swear are the production of the unknown author of *Guy Mannering*, about which you are so much interested. I suppose it will be soon published in London, but I hope these volumes will reach your Ladyship before that takes place. The bookseller here says he is not to publish till next week, but gave me

[1] *Tom Jones*, book xii. cap. 4.

[2] *Harold the Dauntless*, a poem, in six cantos, published anonymously in 1816.

a reading of the volumes, and at my earnest entreaty parted with the set I have the honour to beg your acceptance of. I do not like the first story at all. But the long one, which occupies three volumes, is a most extraordinary production. I cannot think it at all likely that young Harry Mackenzie[1] wrote these books. I know him very well, and have no idea that he has either time or disposition to bestow it on such compositions. He is high at the bar, and has a great deal too much to do for writing novels. His brother James might be more likely to amuse himself in that way, but I think this also is unlikely. I should like to know if you are of my opinion as to these new volumes coming from the same hand. They form two small packets addressed to your Ladyship under cover to Mr. Arbuthnot, Treasury, and I trust will come safe.

I conclude you have seen Lord Byron's new poem. He is a person of most wonderful powers, and I think in nothing more admirable than in the new and fresh interest with which he can present his own feelings, and his own disposition, and his own misfortunes. Almost all characters from Harold to Alp Arslan are more or less Lord Byron himself, and yet you never tire of them. It is the same set of stormy emotions acting on the same powerful mind, distinguished equally by the eccentricities and the temperament of genius; it is the same sea in short, dashing upon the same rocks, yet presented to us under such variety of appearance that they have all the interest of novelty.

I have been living quietly at home all the last summer, working hard at planting and improving my little property, which of late I have extended to about six hundred acres, most of which are of a waste and wild description, but not incapable, from the inequality and exposure of the ground, to be made romantic, and even in some parts beautiful, by planting extensively. So I saunter about from nine in the

[1] Afterwards Lord Mackenzie.

morning till five at night with a plaid about my shoulders and an immensely large bloodhound at my heels,[1] and stick in sprigs which are to become trees when I shall have no eyes to look at them. Somebody will look at them, however, though I question if they will have the same pleasure in gazing on the full-grown oaks that I have had in nursing the saplings. There is something in these operations that connects us more with futurity than anything which we can undertake, for we are sowing that posterity may reap, and planting that they may cut down.

I conclude all the improvements at the Priory are now completed, and that you are in quiet possession, and not thinking of London until spring. We have had dreadful weather in this country, unmatched by anything in the memory of man. A fortnight since people were cutting corn in the midst of the snow, and this not only in upland districts, but in the best corn country. Corn is of course rising fast, and as the wages of the labourers are low, I fear there will be disturbances, unless care is taken in time for preventing them.—Ever, I am, with the most sincere regard, dear Lady Abercorn, your truly grateful and obliged friend,

Walter Scott.

TO THE DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH.

Edinr., 14*th December* 1816.

. . . Your Grace's health is too valuable to your friends and the country, more especially at this moment, to permit us to be very easy while you are complaining. Why not try Bath, my dear Lord? It was of service on former occasions, and I own I should not think the warm air inside of Bowhill, when contrasted with the very sharp air without doors, favourable to the cough at this time, when I think the devil seems to have taken possession of a certain party

[1] Maida, see Glengarry's letter, *ante*, page 358.

of the community. But if I were to say to you in the words of Shakespeare—

> "O what a time you have chose out, brave Chieftain,
> To wear the kerchief; would you were not sick,"

your heart, if not your tongue, would reply—

> "I am not sick if Romans have in hand
> Any exploit worthy the name of honour."

Artillery is off for Glasgow, and also the arms to be delivered to the *élite* of the volunteers. I believe Government are in possession of the plans of the discontented, and that they are very extensive. They cannot but ultimately bring their actors into destruction; but much bloodshed will be avoided by timely precaution. *Here* we are quiet, expecting the great Archduke Nicholas, a shabby sort of name methinks—

> "Alas! O Nick. O Nick, alas!
> Right did they gossip," etc.

rushes involuntarily into one's mind. He is to be entertained by the Advocate on Wednesday and the Provost on Thursday. It is lucky we have such a respectable father of the City at present. He may sing with Cicero—

> "O fortunatam natam me consule Romam."

Indeed, he deserves to be elevated from Dickie Gossip, as we used to term him of yore, into Sir Richard Gossip.[1] Certainly I have seen provosts who would have made strange work upon such occasions.

Lord Byron's poems mark great progress, I suspect, of the insane turn which he has lately shewn, and which I always thought his very particular cast of features strongly indicated. . . .

[1] Mr. Wm. Arbuthnot, then Lord Provost of Edinburgh, entertained the Grand Duke Nicholas at a dinner on December 19th, 1816, for which Scott wrote a song.—See *Poetical Works*, vol. x. p. 365. Mr. Arbuthnot was again in the same office when King George visited Edinburgh in 1822, and was then created a Baronet.

As your Grace is in the way of idle reading, I have forwarded by the coach a copy of certain historical affairs called *Tales of my Landlord*, which give no bad picture of the eminent covenanting period in Scotland. I was surprised to find Ballantyne had not sent a copy to Bowhill of these and other matters. When I have the honour to meet your Grace, I trust to find you well recovered. Charles Sharpe projects a publication of original letters, from which I think much amusement will be derived. I know no man so deep in old genealogy and antiquated scandal; I fear he will destroy the honour of God knows how many of the great-grandmothers of our present *noblesse*. I believe the work will not be for sale, but I will take care your Grace has a copy.

. . . I beg to be most respectfully remembered to the young ladies. Walter is working at the riding with Colonel Leatham, to serve Lord Dalkeith, in the auld phrase, "when he hath aught to do." I suppose following the greyhounds will be the first feudal service.—Ever, my dear Lord, your Grace's truly faithful and obliged,

Walter Scott.

TO THE SAME.

Edinr., 21*st December* 1816.

My dear Lord Duke,—I am glad the tales arrived. James Ballantyne swore himself even blacker in the face than nature hath made him that they were regularly despatched, so I suppose that . . . the packet went on to Carlisle and only reached Bowhill on its return. As your Grace is in the humour of looking after the Covenanters, I beg to add to the Bowhill collection the *History of Wodrow* in two volumes, folio, now become rare. I happen to have two copies, my father having lent his to an old friend, no great arithmetician, but a capital *book-keeper*, whose representatives had the honesty to restore it after his death. It

is a prolix piece of work, and altogether unfit to be read from beginning to end; but there are many curious passages, especially interesting to the local antiquary. I add a collection of the lives of the most eminent covenanting heroes, published by an old Cameronian farmer called Wilson,[1] a tenant of Lady Loudoun.[2] He was still alive when the present young Lady came of age, and at the entertainment then given to the tenantry she requested to have this singular remnant and record of times and opinions pointed out to her. She was requested to look around, and assured she would not fail to distinguish him. Accordingly she at once fixed on an old man with long white hair, a bonnet of extravagant dimensions, a blackish grey suit of an uniform colour, and coarse gaiters of the same, which looked like the spirit of some old covenanter come straight from a conventicle. Her Ladyship made up to the old Trojan, and told him she was aware for how many generations his ancestors had possessed the farm of Loch something or other, and how ready they had been to follow her ancestors in resisting popery and arbitrary power, and therefore she was determined the rent of that possession should never be raised during her lifetime, and therewithal she gave him her fair hand in token of her promise. But the cunning old codger replied that he was infinitely bound to her Ladyship, but that although in the good auld times *licking thumbs* was the only ceremony necessary to make good a bargain, yet in the slippery paths of this contu-

[1] In *Old Mortality* (*W. N.*, vol. x. p. 156), Scott refers to "A True and Impartial Account of the persecuted Presbyterians of Scotland, their being in Arms, and Defeat at Bothwell Brigg in 1679, by William Wilson, late schoolmaster in the parish of Douglas," but the description of the Cameronian farmer applies more closely to John Howie of Lochgoin, "the fine old chronicler of the Cameronians," as Scott styled him, who died in 1793. The first edition of his *Scots Worthies* was published in 1775, and the second in 1781; since then it has often been reprinted. See also *Redgauntlet*, *W. N.*, vol. xxxv. p. 196, note.

[2] Flora, Countess of Loudoun in her own right, wife of Lord Moira, afterward Marquis of Hastings.

macious and backsliding generation, a scrap of stamp-paper was deem'd essential to ensure performance, and so he converted what was perhaps a hasty compliment into a tight life-rent lease. This book is a very singular one and some winter day I will cover it with marginal notes for your Grace: the account of the Battle of Bothwell Bridge is very circumstantial and singular. I hope, my dear Lord, you never refrain from asking any question respecting my scribbling, the answer to which would give you the least gratification. If I do not speak to your Grace on these subjects it is because I don't remember we ever wanted topics of conversation, and might be afraid of annoying you till your Grace should tell me as the German Prince told the Marquis of Tullibardine, *Je suis fâché de vous et de vos petites affaires.*[1]

My view of Scottish History is not yet gone to press, for I wait Thomson's proposed publication of the Chamberlain rolls, which cannot but clear some doubtful passages. If your Grace should in the meantime think of commencing a course of Scottish history, I would recommend Lord Hailes' Annals, Pinkerton's history, Robertson's history, Laing's history, which series contains the full history of Scotland. These books are very different in merit, but of this when we meet. I am truly glad of the example your Grace sets to the country, and am sure the good sense of Saunders will discover the difference between those old patrons who fill his mouth with bread, and now and then his noddle with a little punch, and those new ones who would fill his brain with political discontent, and still his hunger with universal suffrage.[2] After all, "Le vrai Amphitrion est *l'Amphitrion où l'on dîne,*" as is wisely concluded by Molière's Sosia. I

[1] The Duke had said: "You will do me the justice to admit that I have never availed myself of my intimacy with you to spy out any of your intended publications."

[2] At Bowhill the rule was when a fox was killed to give the beaters a guinea's worth of punch.

propose myself that pleasure at Bowhill one day soon. Maida is a little lame, but if he gets better I would like to slip him at a fox, should that matter be going any day next week. I shall be at Abbotsford on Monday to remain about eight days, wind and weather serving. I beg kind respects to Lady Anne and the rest of the Baronial fireside.—Ever your Grace's truly obliged and grateful,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO JOHN RICHARDSON.

ABBOTSFORD, 23*d December* 1816.

I HOPE you had the *Tales of my Landlord*, an early copy, though you have not said that they came to hand. They have apparently succeeded to a wish. At least no sale could be better than theirs is reported to be.

I beg to call to your mind the case of poor Henry Weber. You will find it better stated by his sister, Mrs. Fawcett, in the enclosed letter, than I can pretend to do. Her husband was a captain in the Militia. Now these are reduced, she also must have enough to do. If anything can be got from the Literary Fund, he is certainly a fair object, both from genius and distress. *Here* it is difficult to get English money, so I enclose a cheque for £10 sterling on Sir William Forbes, and pray you in lieu of it to forward a £10 note to Mrs. Fawcett, along with the enclosed letter, which please to seal with a head, and at the same time acquaint her whether or when anything can be done for her brother's assistance. You will see what I have said in the letter to her, which I hope is not drawing too deep on your friendship in a calamitous case of this kind, or committing you too much.

I have enlarged my dominions here not greatly in extent, but infinitely in point of beauty, as my boundary is now a strange secluded ravine full of old thorn trees, hazels,

guelder roses, willows, and so forth, with a dashing rivulet and certain large stones which in England your cocknies would call rocks. I call it the Rhymer's Glen, as it makes part of the scene where Thomas the Rhymer is said to have met the Queen of the Fairies. Vulgarly, it is called Dick's Cleugh—a fico for the phrase. I hope Mrs. Richardson and the bairns are well, as we are at writing hereof. I am here for the Christmas recess. Would I could stay longer, for neither frost nor snow, and we have enough of both, could keep me within doors here, and fine weather hardly can drag me out to the plainstanes of Edinburgh.—Yours truly, Walter Scott.

A Merry Christmas to you and yours.

TO TERRY.

25th December 1816.

My dear Terry,—The "leetle poopy dog"[1] arrived in great preservation, a little lean and qualmish however after his sea voyage. From the length of his tail and the thinness of the hair thereupon, he promises to rival the fame of his predecessor, and I account him a real treasure. We have got him safely out here *maugre* snow and wind, which have been whistling finely on all sides of us; in fact we got through yesterday with great difficulty. I waded up to the knees about two miles in snow; however, we made it out. To-day it is soft weather and everything afloat. But I hope to spend a week here in the midst of plans for planting and building, and Lord knows what. *Taneguy du Châtel, où es-tu?* What work I should have for your measuring lines and compasses, could a wish bring you to the side of these blazing logs and send you back again to your necessary and important avocations.

Mr. Magrath is one of the most correct as well as one

[1] The black greyhound, Marmion, afterwards named Hamlet. See Washington Irving's *Newstead and Abbotsford*.

of the sweetest singers I ever heard. How he may succeed on the stage may depend partly upon other circumstances, but his vocal powers must be successful. He appears also to be a modest, sensible man. . . . He flattered me much by being pleased with Sophia's singing Scotch ballads. Did I tell you Mr. Blore has made a beautiful exterior for my cottage? and did I tell you that I have acquired a new glen near the lake? a quiet, invisible sort of a dell where a witch might boil her kettle in happy seclusion among old thorn trees and scathed rocks, in a deep ravine totally out of sight unless you fall on it by accident. My predecessor had a humour of digging for coal in it, which prevented him including it in our first bargain, but being cured of that folly he has bequeathed me two or three lateral excavations which a little coaxing will turn into natural caverns. The *last* man who wanted work in this parish has been for some time employ'd in constructing a path up this odd glen. I call it the Rhymer's Glen, because it makes part of Huntly Wood where Thomas the Rhymer met the Queen of the Fairies. All this is but a sort of trash, but it is what my head is just now most busy about.

I hope you will make my respectful thanks acceptable to Mr. St. Aubyn for the very handsome and valued present he has made me in Marmion. I have not yet ventured to change his name, having been so called, though perhaps it would be a more proper epithet in another person's possession. I have some thoughts of calling him Harold if I get over this scruple. I expect him to win many a silver collar. It is in good company, for I have two gallant brutes now as ever ran. I plagued your neighbour Mr. Bullock some days since about some plans which he carried up with him for my interior arrangements. I trust I shall have them in a day or two, as my castle must stand still till I get them. Maida, my great dog, has been sitting at

Mr. Blore's instance to Mr. Nasmyth, who admires him very much. I was obliged to attend the sittings myself, for the subject though regularly supplied with a cold beef bone was apt to grow impatient. Mrs. Scott sends her kindest respects to Mrs. Terry; as for the pens, I have intercepted them, judging I was the most likely of the two to find employment for them. They are by far the most useful invention of the kind I have yet seen. I beg my compliments to the Lady and the kinchin,[1] and am, truly yours,

Walter Scott.

A merry Christmas to you.

TO LADY ABERCORN.

Abbotsford, 28*th December* 1816.

My dear Lady Abercorn,—I am truly glad the *Tales* have amused you. In my poor opinion they are the best of the four sets, though perhaps I only think so on account of their opening ground less familiar to me than the manners of the Highlanders. I can assure your Ladyship your laudable curiosity about the author would not remain ungratified, but if Tom wrote these volumes, he has not put me in his secret. He has certainly powers both of pathos and humour, and has also read a great deal of old-fashioned sort of reading, but I greatly doubt his possessing the steadiness of application necessary to write twelve or thirteen volumes in the space of two or three years; and, moreover, I do not see why he should so rigorously keep his secret. By-the-bye, he and his family are coming home; he has succeeded to about £3000 by my eldest brother's death, and will have, I suppose, as much more when my mother is removed from us. So they cannot be said to be in distress, if they will but be good managers, especially as he has a small salary besides. His wife has come over.

[1] A child, in cant language. German, *Kindchen.*

To return to the *Tales*. . . . Burley is a real person, and appears in the melancholy history of the period as the leader of the party who killed Archbishop Sharpe on Magus Moor, near St. Andrews. The command was first offered to Hackston of Rathillet (Balfour's brother-in-law), who declined it on account of there being some private dispute between the prelate and him, which might lead to the misconstruction of what these fanatics called the execution of judgement. Rathillet and Burley were both at the skirmish of Drumclog, where Clavers was beaten, and at that of Bothwell Bridge. Hackston was afterwards taken and executed, but Burley escaped, and died almost immediately before the Revolution; and, if I mistake not, was on board the Prince of Orange's own vessel at the time of his death. There was also in the Life Guards such a person as Francis Stewart, the grandson of the last Earl of Bothwell. I have in my possession various proceedings at his father's instance, for recovering some part of the Earl's large estates which had been granted to the Earls of Buccleuch and Roxburgh. It would appear Charles I. made some attempts to reinstate him in these lands, but, like most of that poor monarch's measures, the attempt only served to augment his own enemies, for Buccleuch was one of the first who declared against him in Scotland, and raised a regiment of 1200 men, of whom my grandfather's grandfather, Sir William Scott of Harden, was Lieutenant-Colonel. This regiment was very active at the destruction of Montrose's Highland army at Philiphaugh, of which the country people still sing a rhyme—

> "At Philiphaugh the fray began,
> At Hareheadwood it ended;
> The Scotts out o'er the Graemes they ran,
> Sae merrily they bended."

In Charles II.'s time this old knight suffered as much through the non-conformity of his lady as Cuddie

through that of his mother. It seems the lady would not be kept from Eildon Hills when there was any worthy Mr. Kettledrummle or precious Mr. Rumbleberry to give her a screed of doctrine. So Sir William was repeatedly called before the privy council, and fined at different times to the amount of several thousand pounds, although he protested he was totally unable to rule his wife, and requested the Council to take the management of her Ladyship into its own hands. But notwithstanding what one would have thought a most reasonable plea, they sent him to Edinburgh Castle, and afterwards to the Bass Island, where he suffered three years' imprisonment. My father's grandmother, who lived to the uncommon age of 98 years, perfectly remembered being carried when a girl to these field-preachings with her mother, where the clergyman thundered from the top of a rock, and the ladies sate upon their side-saddles, which were placed on the turf for their accommodation, while the men all stood round armed with swords and pistols, and watches were kept on each neighbouring eminence to give notice of the approach of the soldiers. I mention these minute circumstances in order to make your Ladyship aware how nearly our oral and family traditions connect themselves with these disorderly times.

I do not know that there is precisely such a place as the Linn, described at the end of the tale. But in most of the mountainous parts of Scotland such strange places are to be found. I went on a pilgrimage with the Duke of Buccleuch to visit one of them not long since, and it was as horrible a place as imagination can form, and of a very break-neck character. Here also some of the heroes of the covenant are said to have held out, though it passes belief how humanity could hold out against the cold, wet, and accumulated horrors of such an abode. Only I don't think it could be much worse than we have had with snow, flood, and tempest, for these eight days that my wife and I have

inhabited this cottage. But I feel very like Goldsmith's Swiss—

> "Dear is the shed that to my soul conforms,
> And dear the hill that lifts me to the storms."

So I have been among the mists and snows about five or six hours every day.

On looking over my letter it reminds me of the character Captain Bobadil gives of Squire Downright: "All old iron and rusty proverbs, a good commodity for a smith to make hob-nails with."[1] After all, I recollect one circumstance which may interest you concerning these tales. Old Mortality was a living person. I have myself seen him about twenty years ago repairing the Covenanters' tombs as far north as Dunnottar. It was his sole occupation and only business on earth. I have an indistinct recollection that he was from the parish of Closeburn, in Nithsdale, and that his name was Paterson.[2] . . .

FROM LADY LOUISA STUART.

GLOUCESTER PLACE, *December 5th*, 1816.

DEAR MR. SCOTT,—I came to town yesterday morning, to leave it again to-morrow. I found something you wot of upon my table, and as I dare not take it with me to a friend's house for fear of exciting curiosity ("*What is that?* and *how did you come by it?*") I have been reading against time, devouring the food till I am almost choked. However, gone through it fairly though hastily I have, and now it is locked up in a drawer, there to lie safely till I hear of it from others, and assure yourself no human being shall hear of it from me.[3] I agree with you the second tale is the best; and yet while reading the first I wondered what you meant by saying so, for it interested

[1] Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*, Act i. sc. 4.
[2] See Introduction to *W. N.*, vol. ix.
[3] *Black Dwarf* and *Old Mortality*.

me strongly. But the second is super-excellent in all its points; it breaks up fresh ground, and has all the raciness of originality. I cannot help thinking it will bear down the world before it triumphantly. As usual with certain authors, it makes its personages our intimate acquaintance, and its scenes so present to the eye that last night after sitting up unreasonably late over it, I got no sleep, from a kind of fever of mind it had occasioned. It seemed as if I had been an eye and ear witness of all the passages, and I could not lull the agitation into calmness. Mause and Cuddie hurried my spirits in another way; they forced me to laugh out aloud, which one seldom does alone. On a second slower reading I expect to be still better pleased, and then also I suppose I shall find out the faults. At present it has, in the Scotch phrase, "taken me off my feet," and I do not criticise, though I think you will believe me when I say I do not and will not flatter. One thing I regret, that like the author of the *Antiquary* Jedediah did not add a glossary; because even I, a mongrel, occasionally paying long visits to Scotland, and hearing Girsy at Bothwell gate and Peggy Macgowan hold forth in the village,—even I, thus qualified, have found a great many words absolute Hebrew to me, and I fear the altogether English will find very many more beyond their comprehension or conjecture. But this may be remedied in another edition. I have as yet only one great attack to make, and that upon a single word; but such a word! such an anachronism! Claverhouse says he has no time to hear *sentimental* speeches.[1] My dear sir! tell Jedediah that Claverhouse never heard the sound of those four syllables in his life. We are used to them; but *sentiment* and *sentimental* were, I believe, first introduced into the language by Sterne, and are hardly as old as I am. Let alone the Covenanters' days, I am persuaded you would look in

[1] The objectionable word was removed in the second edition.

vain for them in the works of Richardson and Fielding, authors of George the II.'s reign. Nay, the French, from whom they were borrowed, did not talk of *le sentiment* in that sense till long after Louis XIV.'s reign. No such thing is to be found in Madame de Sévigné, la Bruyère, etc. etc. etc. At home or abroad I defy Lord Dundee ever to have met with the expression. Mr. Peter Pattieson had been reading the *Man of Feeling*, and it was a slip of his tongue, which I am less inclined to excuse than Mause's abstruse Scotch, which I duly reverence, as she did Kettledrummle's sermons, because I do not understand it. Once more I shall be much disappointed if this work does not quickly acquire a very great reputation. I fancy Mr. Morritt is in the secret; yet, as I am not certain, I will keep on the secure side and not mention it when I write to him, however one may long to *intercommune* on such subjects with those likely to hold the same faith.[1]

What you say of the Master of Bowhill gives me great uneasiness, and I can perceive that his nearer friends are not perfectly comfortable about him. God preserve so valuable a life!

This is a very hurried letter, but I borrow an hour from the night to scribble, being most really thankful to you and unwilling to delay writing perhaps for several days.—Believe me, your much obliged and very sincere,

L. STUART.

[1] Lady Louisa Stuart appears not to have been told the secret of the authorship of the novels by Scott until after the publication of *The Antiquary* in May 1816.

CHAPTER XIII

1817

EDINBURGH AND ABBOTSFORD

I have lain on a sick man's bed,
Watching for hours for the leech's tread,
As if I deem'd that his presence alone
Were of power to bid my pain begone ;
I have listed his words of comfort given,
As if to oracles from heaven ;
I have counted his steps from my chamber door,
And bless'd them when they were heard no more.—

Harold the Dauntless, Canto iv.

FAMILY ANNALS AND LITERARY WORK

1817—AGE 46

First serious attack of spasms, March.

Death of Lady Frances Douglas, May.

Excursion to Rob Roy's country with Adam Ferguson in July.

Rob Roy, 3 vols., published by Constable, Dec. 31.

Visits of Washington Irving, Lady Byron, and Sir David Wilkie to Abbotsford.

Harold the Dauntless, published by Longman in 12mo, in January.

Ballad, *The Sultan of Serendib.*

History of Europe for 1815. *Edinburgh Annual Register.*

Introduction to *Border Antiquities*, 2 vols. 4to. September.

Song, *The Sun upon the Weirdlaw Hill.*

Contribution to *Quarterly Review*—

Tales of My Landlord in No. 32, January.

Kemble's Farewell Address, March.

CHAPTER XIII.

TO LADY LOUISA STUART.

ABBOTSFORD, *January 1st*, 1817.

MY DEAR LADY LOUISA,—You will already know better than I do that the tales are like Don Quixote—

> "Now their fame is up and may go
> From Toledo to Madrid."

My private agent reports 4,000 copies sold and 2,000 in active preparation, all bespoke; so that they have come off with all acceptation. No circumstance in the matter, however, can give me half the pleasure of your Ladyship's kind approbation, which I value beyond a whole wilderness of critics or monkies either.[1] I hope there is no great harm in the lies I am obliged to tell in self-defence, since my secret would otherwise be at the mercy of every one who chose to ask a blunt question. I very often qualify my denial with this statement. It is very diverting how people are divided —but from those I have lived much with I cannot escape, and they have only the politeness to be silent on the question. I suppose a thousand peculiarities of feeling and expression, besides little anecdotes noted in one's mind, mark such compositions to those who see much of you. In the meantime the *mystification* of those who would see *very far* into the millstone is sufficiently diverting.

Morritt is in the secret: you may communicate with him on the subject with all freedom. We (an important monosyllable, which includes on this occasion my wife and me) have been here since the day before Christmas, amidst a beautiful succession of snow, hail, rain, flood, and frost.

[1] *Merchant of Venice*, Act iii. sc. 1.

Twice the Tweed has been as high as I remember seeing it, and we are nearly forty years' acquaintance (man and boy). We live in the little cottage like the memorable Cobbler, making it serve for everything but the actual kitchen, and such is the contradiction of human nature, that each day, when our only dish is placed on the table, I thank heaven that I have escaped the feasting of Edinburgh at this jovial season. Yet had any one said "go, do this," I suppose I would have consider'd it as a great affront and hardship. Is not this among the twenty things in life that deserve the title Dryden gave his poem of "The Medal Reversed." However, the cottage is destined (if such visions of splendour are not reversed in their turn) to rise like Rome under the empire of Augustus, who used to boast he found the city of brick and left it marble. We meditate adding to the old but-and-ben a splendid tenement to contain an eating-room, and two good little sleeping apartments with their dressing-rooms, and a book-closet for my own use: so that I trust the next time your Ladyship comes to Scotland (if there be faith in the masons of Galashiels) we will be able to accommodate you for two or three days. The outside is rather fantastic, but I think will look well, from the irregular combination of the various parts of the building. I must not forget to thank your Ladyship for your acute and indisputable criticism on the application of the word sentimental. How it escaped my pen I know not, unless that the word owed me a grudge for the ill will I have uniformly borne it, and was resolved to slip itself in for the express purpose of disgracing me. I will certainly turn it out the first opportunity. I am going up to Bowhill to-day to see the master, and trust I shall find him better. He writes in good spirits, and complains less of his cough. . . . Mrs. Scott offers her respects, and I ever am, dear Lady Louisa, your very much obliged and faithful servant, Walter Scott.

FROM LADY LOUISA STUART.

CHISELHURST, *January 11th*, 1817.

DEAR MR. SCOTT,—Perhaps this is a quicker return of fire than you reckon upon, but I want, like a trusty spy, to impart all my intelligence. First, let me say though, that I feel the value of your confidence and return you sincere thanks for it. Thank you a little also for the diversion it makes me share,—something similar to one I used to take formerly by going disguised to ladies who saw masks, in days when, from shyness, I did not love to hear the sound of my own voice. Hiding my face set my tongue at liberty, and as my habits were always retired, I was precisely the last person in London whom my nearest friends could suspect of being the mask that teazed them. Then came the enjoyment of their different accounts and conjectures for a week afterwards; and if I asked an innocent question—"Pooh! it's a sort of thing *you* can't enter into." You see I have been in training for a conspirator.

With the same amusement I now sit by the fire, sucking in the sagacious remarks I hear. Says one, who has a favourite relation that writes—what nobody reads—"I am clear this is not by the author of *Waverley*; it is too good. *Waverley* was certainly Scott's: now Scott could not write this, it is above him, and there is not that constant description of scenery that makes him so tiresome"—delighted all the while to put the unknown author over the head of the admired one. But in particular commend me to the story sent us from Scotland! The murder is out, and it does not signify disputing. Mrs. Thomas Scott owns all the four books to be hers, with some help from her husband, and some licking over by her brother-in-law. One might reply:—"Verily I think the 'oman be a witch; indeed I do spy a great peard under her muffler."[1] I could not

[1] *Merry Wives*, Act iv. sc. 2.

help saying to Lady Douglas that most likely Mrs. T. Scott had never owned any such thing; but in case it were proved that she had, it would convince me they were altogether yours, and you had spread the report yourself in order to see how absurd a one the world could be brought to swallow; since Mother Pratt's *peard* was not half so evident. For I do like the judge who told Barrington, the pick-pocket, he had tried him as if he had never seen his face before. I endeavour to forget that I *know* a word of the matter, so am free to say what I believed the first hour I read *Waverley*, and should have gone on believing ever since, had you denied the charge with ever so good a grace. I keep to the evidence before me; and how any one who knows you can have a doubt, is past my comprehension. Not for the anecdotes—"they 're yours, were mine, and might be told to thousands"—but the little touches, the modes of expression, the slight words that raise a picture in one's mind with all the force of a long simile, the hints which in the same way awaken feeling or excite deep reflection, much more that I cannot describe, render it as distinguishable as a man's handwriting. And this people every day swear to, without being able to explain what gives them the certainty which yet they feel they have, that it is John's and not Richard's.

I shall not scruple to offer a few criticisms. Earnscliff at the beginning of the *Black Dwarf* hushes Hobbie on the subject of his father's death, saying it was never certainly known who gave the fatal blow. At the end we find the dwarf had been tried for it, found guilty of manslaughter, and suffered the punishment; *ergo*, no fact could be ascertained more clearly. This oversight did not strike me at the first hasty reading, nor has it anybody else now, the interest of the story so hurries one on. I take care not to point it out, but some of the envious will hit upon it, and crow. I honestly tell you that neither

I *nor* anybody else can bear Miss Buskbody and her novels at the end of the fourth volume. If it could but be erased from future editions! And now I will copy part of a letter I have just received, without altering a word:—

"I congratulate you on having had such a good meal
" as the *Tales*. I think nothing can be more admirable
" than the characters, or more so than the closeness with
" which they are kept up to their original setting out.
" You never lose sight of the first impression they made
" upon you; and on the whole no book of the present
" day seems to be so universally relished. The subject
" is disgusting and melancholy; and though the continual
" dragging forth of Scripture on all subjects, grave or gay,
" belongs peculiarly to the *sect*, and all their descendants,
" it is very offensive; and being often done with great
" humour, will leave a ludicrous impression that may
" present itself when it should not. But the book is a
" choice book, and I long to hear your judgement of it."

I will not be mysterious; this comes from Mrs. Preston, whom you have seen, and who is an unprejudiced person. I fear the objection she makes has some foundation, though I know nothing can be further from your principles or intentions, and though I can hardly tell how the times and subject could be handled without stumbling on some such rock of offence. But I dread the outcry which those same descendants (as she calls them), who are very numerous and very powerful at present, may perhaps set up against the work. Its author may fare far worse than Lord Byron with all his atheism, for the reason given to Louis XIV. why Molière was persecuted rather than the writer of a blasphemous farce—*cette pièce attaque la religion, Molière joue les dévots.* And now I have done fault-finding for myself and others. All besides that I have heard is praise; but in general the *coterie* here (I am at Mrs. Weddell's, where we have been

reading it aloud) are disposed to think it not by the same author as *Waverley*, etc., and to think it superior to all three. I myself place it above Guy and Monkbarns, but *Waverley* being my first love, I cannot give him up. As a *whole* however I believe it does bear the palm, and it surprises one by not sinking into flatness after the return of Morton from abroad; which was a very slippery place for *you*, who profess never knowing what you are going to write. By the bye, the authoress of one of our best novels, remarkable for the striking scene with which it concludes, told a friend of mine that this occurred to her first; *i.e.* she wrote the end, and then made a beginning to it, shaped a story to bring it on. Suppose you try the same method next time—it is just Pope's, you know, when he wrote the second line of his couplets before the first. But in Morton a fresh interest arises, and all is kept perfectly alive till Lord Evandale expires, which I would fain call the termination. I must mention a remark Mrs. Weddell has repeatedly made: "This has the *nature* of Daniel Defoe's novels, tho' with a higher style of writing. I can hardly forbear fancying every word of it true." And we are all agreed that instead of perverting history, it elucidates it, and would give a person partially acquainted with it the desire to be more so. But I am afraid the wise young people of these days, familiar with hydrogen and nitrogen, and Pentandria Monogynia, do not read history at all. Indeed, *forbye* the young, I have met with an established Blue-stocking who had never heard of Sir William Temple, and seemed only just to have found out there was once such a person as Lady Russell.

This letter is unreasonably long, considering on whom I am bestowing my tediousness, but I will not lengthen it further with apologies. If you burn it unread, there will be no harm done nor anybody affronted. May your buildings and gardens prosper in proportion to your other works,

and no Baroness Howe arise in future times to demolish them when they are become hallowed objects and classic ground![1] With my best compliments to Mrs. Scott, believe me ever your much obliged and sincere, L. STUART.

TO THE DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH.

EDINR., 22*nd January* 1817.

MY DEAR LORD DUKE,—Many thanks for Tom Hutson's[2] Minstrelsy, which I never heard before, and quite understand. It has a wild poetical turn about it, singularly fitted to Tom's occupation, and I think if Campbell[3] has a good *lilt* for it, I will endeavour to patch it up with a verse or two in the same tone. Your Grace (or Tom) has made no mistake as to *win*, but as to *break* in the second line, which should be *brook* or *bruik*, signifying in old Scotch and northern English to *enjoy*, for which it is used as a synonym in our law as "to bruick or enjoy a farm." The word *brook* is still used in English in an oblique sense. I cannot *brook* it, *i.e.* endure it, or rather *relish* it. The moor-cock therefore gives his solemn oath

"He cannot brook the carle's win."

He cannot, that is, relish the carle's (churle's or husbandman's) mode of living—win being equivalent to *wene*, habit of life—or perhaps *win*, mode of acquiring gain. The point turns upon the preference given to a mountain life and scenery, in which I think your Grace coincides with your vassal the moor-cock, although perchance that tribe may occasionally rue your similarity in taste.

I said nothing about the Records in the scroll of a Commission,[4] but e'en put the saddle on the right horse, at

[1] Pope's villa at Twickenham, demolished by Lady Howe.

[2] A favourite keeper of Duke Charles.

[3] Alexander Campbell, Scott's old teacher. See *Life*, vol. i. p. 73, *n.*

[4] The Commission appointed by the Regent to search for the Scottish Regalia in Edinburgh. The warrant was issued in October 1817 and the investigation made on February 8th, 1818, when the "Honours

least on the right hobby-horse, setting forth the lodging of the Regalia, and the reasons there were to suppose said Regalia were deposited in said chest, and the probability that said Regalia had suffered or might be suffering damage by remaining unexamined for such a length of time, and therefore issued "our sovereign will and pleasure to open said chest and examine the state of the Regalia, if therein found, and report thereon, that our pleasure may be made known in the premises," and so forth, in good set terms.

Now to the danger of the *quests*:—the Mob we need not fear, for it is a solemn article of the treaty of Union that the Regalia are never to be removed from Scotland. And as to the Devil—hang him, foul collier, as Sir Toby says.[1] Besides, it would be hard if between the authority of the chieftain and the magic of the minstrel of the clan we cannot borrow Michael Scott's conjuring book; and so

> "Devils all, as swart as pitch,
> Be ye cock-tail'd, be ye switch,
> Be ye horn'd, or be ye poll'd,
> To defy you I am bold."[2]

I have a curious manuscript song (a most perfect blast) which I copied with many others from an old manuscript at Arniston, upon the lodging of the Regalia in the Castle; if it could be set to music and solemnly performed before the big-wigs of the law, when they set forth to seek for the royal treasure, it would have a striking and novel

of Scotland" were found in perfect preservation in the great oak chest. See Scott's *Miscellanies*, vol. vii. and *Life*, vol. v. pp. 273-283.

[1] *Twelfth Night*, Act iii. Sc. 4.

[2] Scott in his *Devorgoil*, published in 1830, varied two lines of this elegant quatrain—(*Poetical Works*, xii. p 213),—and was thus humorously taken to task by his friend Rose for the plagiarism. "My dear Scott, Hinves has just broken in upon me with the following exclamation: 'Lord! sir, to think that Sir Walter Scott should steal the two best lines out of my "Devils all, as swart as pitch," etc. and put them into the *Doom of Devorgoil* and never to make an acknowledgment of their being mine!' How you will answer this I know not."—See *Journal*, vol. ii. p. 186—David Hinves.

effect. The chest ought not to be heavy—there is nothing stated to be lodged in it but the crown, sceptre, and sword of state—none of them very weighty articles. I think it most likely they are still there; the removal of them would have inferr'd dire responsibility; nor have our sovereigns since Queen Anne's time been so hard pushed as to pawn the Crown jewels, which could have been the only purpose of abstracting them. It is very true there is a crown shown in the Jewel Office in the Tower, London, called the Scottish Crown, but no notice of the sword and sceptre which must have accompanied them. Should these Regalia be returned *non sunt inventa*, I will believe that the said sceptre and sword went to pay the knowing cut-purse who, like Hamlet's uncle—

> "From the *kist* the precious diadem stole,
> And put it in his pocket."

Our friend Lord Clerk Register has been very unwell. I think he may give the Lord of the Merse another chance one day. I trust this will find your Grace safely arrived at Bowhill, to which I propose to bring my cargo of old iron as soon as I learn you are settled. I hope Lady Margaret is quite stout again.—Ever your Grace's most truly faithful, WALTER SCOTT.

I am about to sign my name three hundred times for variety's sake, in order to attest officially a set of the papers in your Grace's appeal for the process before the House of Peers.

FROM LADY LOUISA STUART.

LONDON, *February* 10, 1817.

DEAR MR. SCOTT,—Mirror of prudence as I am, I deferred my thanks for Harold[1] till Mr. Morritt came to frank them, for fear of being asked, "What can you be so often writing about to Walter Scott?" I do not

[1] The poem of *Harold the Dauntless*, published anonymously in January.

think the name signifies a farthing; it is fantastic in Lord Byron, but natural here. You have looked at the work yourself as painters say they sometimes do at their canvas till they see nothing rightly; lay it by for a twelvemonth, and then coming to it fresh, I am sure you will like it better, for it has the true stamp and is no degenerate child of its father. But I would apply to you Mason's epithet for Dryden (tho' not in the same sense) "*tuneful spendthrift*!" You have flung thus to the winds the rich materials of a poem that might make another man's reputation. Were Harold's conversion more gradual, had you had patience to dwell upon the workings of his mind, to soften his heart by degrees into humanity, what a noble subject! As it is, however, it will do for me. I must mention my favourite passages—in one way, the whole portrait of Witikind, in another, that of Metelill and the gay beginning of the 2nd Canto. The signing the cross and letting fall the mace in the fifth. The whole of the scene at Durham, but especially Vinsauf and Walwayn, and that description of the rich man's feelings towards his physician—"Which oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed."[1] Surely all these, and more, are beautiful and original. I shall not deny perceiving something of the *huddling* you acknowledge: perhaps the page did not himself suspect he was ever to become a woman, when he began like a genuine page with so many roguish tricks, stealing purses and mantles, and scampering off on the bishop's palfrey? By the by, I am pleased with the little kind word dropped in favour of my old acquaintance, his present Right Reverend, to whom the world never likes to do justice, because he has (or *had*, for he has almost outlived it) a very slight harmless tinge of the coxcomb, mingled with a thousand excellencies, generosity and benevolence almost unbounded, and the humour of impartiality,

[1] Pope's *Essay on Criticism*.

bestowing the preferments in his gift upon piety, or learning, or merit of some sort or other, on persons often unknown to him. "Oh but (say they) he has a vanity in doing that." Well then, much good may it do him! It would be a fine world if all the great patrons in Church and State indulged the same foible.[1]

I piously believe what you say of the stubborn Muse really existing, who will not come when you do call for her, and will come when it pleases herself, altho' I have heard a poet give quite another account of the matter—but then, it was quite another kind of poet—old Mr. Hoole, the translator of Ariosto, and who once fell in my way near thirty years ago. He was a clerk in the India-House, a man of business of that ancient breed, now extinct, which used to be as much marked by plaited-cambric ruffles, a neat wig, a snuff-coloured suit of clothes, and a corresponding sobriety of look, as one race of spaniels is by the black nose and silky hair. "When I have been long otherwise employed, and out of the habit of writing verse," said he, "I find it rather difficult, and get on slowly: but after a little practice I fall into the track again; then I can easily make a hundred lines in a day." Just as I might reckon how many seams I could sew when my hand was in; and probably the act was full as mechanical. Yet no poet, living or dead, not even Mr. Hoole, with his method and cambric ruffles, ever had so much sterling common sense as yourself, and a good proof of it you give in resolving never to read the squibs thrown against you. I am glad you are so indifferent about the wrath of the *Unco Guid*, as Burns calls them. You have no notion what a strong and increasing body they are in this country, and how much resemblance they bear to the gentry described in *Old Mortality*—chiefly in a certain odd, unaccountable

[1] The allusion in Canto iv. to the Bishop of Durham, the venerable Shute Barrington.

tendency to the factious side in politics, from which you would think methodism calculated to keep them aloof. "Aye! aye! the *fellow* was well hissed in the park,"[1] were the decent words uttered on the late occasion by a devout young gentleman of the right faith, who had however just taken orders in our church (professedly wishing it destroyed), and was come up to town to solicit the minister for a living; but his joy could not be contained. I agree with you in thinking the open outrages proceeded to a good thing. I can remember the riots of the year Eighty. We passed a tremendous week, but it kept us quiet for the ten years following; all the people who in Seventy-nine, had thought it a good joke to set the mob upon the ministerial houses, for joy of Admiral Keppel's acquittal, drawing in their horns most visibly as soon as they saw with their eyes what sort of a wild beast it was when thoroughly let loose. The change of tone and language was very striking, and the same individuals, I believe, never promoted mobbing again. A different race had arisen by the time of the French Revolution. The newspaper to-day tells us of arrests for treason, but only poor miserables. I wish some good-sized fish could be caught in that net,—always provided the proof be such as to bear out the accusation, for otherwise it does harm and is a weak measure ever to bring forward that great word. I wonder what possesses me to descant thus! I, who pique myself upon being the only old maid, having no business whatever with politics, who forbears to take them particularly into her cognizance.

"*Have you read the Tales of my Landlord?*" continues to be the first question everybody asks one. Here, some of its greatest admirers are quite confident that it is not by the same author as *Waverley*, and give very good reasons for their opinion. Not so our two friends of the

[1] The Regent was highly unpopular at this date.

two houses of Buccleuch and Douglas; conjecture is at an end with them, because they *know* who wrote it: your sister-in-law has owned it a joint undertaking, and there is an end. So, to my great diversion, they all write me word how well they can trace the difference of hands,—point out exactly where the weaker pen was laid down and the stronger taken up. It is amazing to me that Lady Douglas should overlook what I thought a most daring step of the author's—the next thing to his own signature; I mean the very name (invented by herself, I believe) of her daughter Fanny's poor little dog *Elphin*. But not one of them takes any notice of it.

My dear Mr. Scott, you are very good to me, but am I not very bad to you, in repaying your precious gifts with such unreasonable long letters? Nothing forces you to read them though. I shall end this after I have rejoiced with you at the amendment I hear of in the Duke of Buccleuch's health, and mentioned that friend Morritt looks very well. He encountered a far greater danger in his journey up than in all his travels before. That he, his eldest niece, her governess, and a servant who was on the dickey, should all have escaped perfectly unhurt, is what could scarcely have happened to any four cats in the same situation. He will tell you the particulars himself, I dare say, and the story will make you shudder. Pray give my best regards to Mrs. Scott, and believe me, your heartily obliged, and very sincere, L. S.

TO TERRY.

. . . My brother has sent me a curious knocker from Canada, the foot of a deer which he had killed, mounted with silver. We must dispose that on one of the doors within, as it might tempt our border honesty if left out of doors. I have an idea of opening the private door between my

study and the dining-room by means of a deer's foot on the principle of "pull the bobbin and the latch will come up." I have two deer's legs, tokens of hill sport many a day since, which might be brass-mounted and adapted to such purpose. By the way, I have got over my Waterloo armour—two sets of cuirasses and a ponderous cap. . . .

. . . I am truly glad Mrs. Terry is coming round again. In such cases, I am a great friend to those ancient and established doctors,—Dr. Diet, and Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Merriman. I will be cautious in speaking on the subject. for fear of alarming her friends in York Place. . . . I have availed myself of Mr. St. Aubyn's permission and changed Marmion's name (in respect of his inky cloak) to Hamlet; he promises great things. Old Double, the quondam Marmion of St. John Street, is not only dead, but forgotten, for James has got a little buntin baby, and struts about "as great as the Prince of Condé," as the song says, raising the eye to the ceiling and meditating the grand mathematical proposition how one and one can make three. Do you think a commodity of real old stained glass can be picked up in London? . . .

TO THE SAME.

Abbotsford, *Feb.* 21, 1817.

. . . I understand Maturin is bringing [out] something tremendous in the way of a melodrama. Shall we see you and Mrs. Terry and young Walter this summer? I have in my offer, and think I shall buy it, an ebony cabinet six feet wide, which would just fill the place where the book press now is in the little drawing-room. All my planting is now really over, but I have had upwards of twenty hands working all winter, which I am old-fashioned enough to think is a better thing than if I could have given each of them suffrage for a Member of Parliament; and what is more uncommon, the people

think so too. I have not allowed one man in the parish to ask work in vain, and must have been half ruined but for certain things you wot of.

FROM JOANNA BAILLIE.

LONDON, *February* 21*st*, 1817.

MY DEAR SIR,—I enclose to you a letter which I received from Lady Byron yesterday, and regret that anything I have to communicate to you, or anything I have to say immediately from myself, should give you pain, as I know such things must do to a heart like your own.

The amiable and candid view she takes of your motives in reviewing, as you have done in the *Quarterly*, Lord Byron's late works, is not the effect of prudence and deliberation, but was the immediate fruit of her own sweet and forbearing nature. I saw her, just after she had read the *Review*,[1] not knowing who was the writer, and she well perceived the use that will be made of it against herself. The next time we met, a few days afterwards, she told me she was informed the article was written by you (which I was not willing to believe), but added that tho' it was calculated to give an unfavourable impression of her to the world, she believed it was written from a generous desire to befriend Lord Byron, and honoured you for your motives. She soon returned to the country, and has I suppose met with friends who have viewed the publication in a very mischievous light, which has induced her to send you this message, for when she left me she hinted at no such intention.

There is nothing which the world can pretend to censure in Lady Byron but that she is supposed to be of a very

[1] Of this article by Scott in the 31st No. of the *Review* Byron said: "The perusal has given me as much gratification as any composition of that nature could give, and more than any other has given; . . . there is a tact and delicacy throughout, not only with regard to me, but to *others*, which, as it had not been observed elsewhere, I had till now doubted whether it could be observed *anywhere*."—Moore's *Byron*, royal 8vo, p. 342.

cold and unforgiving nature. That she is a woman of great self-command I know, and where this is the case we cannot well judge of the degree of feeling; but I never in the whole course of my life met with any person of a more candid or forgiving disposition. She has borne treatment and wrongs exceeding anything I have ever heard of in married life; and could she [have] hoped for any amendment in his character, or even without this hope could she have continued to live with him without becoming herself worthless and debased, she would I am confident never have left him. You may perhaps suspect my testimony as being partial to her and coming from her, and I know not well how to remove the difficulty. I can only say that I am most thoroughly convinced of the truth of it, and that I hope you will receive what I say with some degree of confidence, till you shall find from better authority that it is false. Why should I be too ready to think or believe ill of Lord Byron? After the great friendship I have on all occasions experienced from yourself, I have not from any of the modern poets received stronger proofs of a disposition to serve me than from him. You will remember too that when I returned from Switzerland, having heard there that he was living with a gentleman and his wife on the banks of the lake, how ready I was to suppose he was in a respectable house, and to interpret this in his favour. But I wish I had been less ready, for I have innocently misled you perhaps to think better of him and of his personal state than he deserves. Not long after I sent you my last letter, I learnt that this same gentleman and his wife were a married man who has run away from this country, and a girl whom he has seduced, and that their house was anything but a respectable one. This information did not come from Lady B. Oh! why have you endeavoured to reconcile the world in some degree with that unhappy man, at the expense of having yourself

perhaps considered as regarding want of all principle and the vilest corruption with an indulgent eye? Indeed, my good, my kind, my unwearied friend, this goes to my heart! I truly believe that you have done it to cheer in some degree the despair of a perishing mind, and rouse it to make some effort to save itself; but this will not be. You cannot save him, tho' by that effort you may depress a most worthy character, who has been already so sinned against, and who bears the deepest part of her distress in silence. And now that I am taking the privilege of a friend—I had almost said of a *mother*—to rate you thus, let me ask you why you have reviewed Lord B.'s poetry in a strain of praise which in my simple opinion is far beyond its real merit? I may not think you insincere, and therefore I must even believe that your wits have been a wool-gathering. I shall give but one instance of it, as I would not prolong my letter. The thunderstorm on the lake which you praise as the most sublime description—

> "Far along from peak to peak the rattling crags among,
> Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
> But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
> And Jura answers thro' her misty shroud
> Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud."
> "And the big rain comes dancing to the earth,
> And now again, 'tis black—and now the glee
> Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain mirth."[1]

These familiar personifications give meanness instead of sublimity to the description (if description it may be called), besides being far-fetched and fantastical. I have transcribed these lines from the *Edinburgh Review*, which also greatly praises this passage, but nevertheless my opinion is the same in spite of two such high authorities. What I should consider as bad in Wordsworth, I can never believe is good in Lord Byron. I have many things which I was to have said to you about myself, things in which I

[1] From the xcii. and xciii. stanzas of the third canto of *Childe Harold*.

would ask your advice, notwithstanding your bad taste in poetry, but I cannot speak of any other subject at present. I hope this will find you all well in N. Castle Street, and send my kind wishes to Mrs. Scott and my young friend Sophia.—Believe me always, my dear friend, truly and affectionately yours, J. BAILLIE.

FROM THE SAME.

HAMPSTEAD, *March 3rd*, 1817.

I THOUGHT I could not do better than send your previous letter[1] to Lady Byron, that you might immediately speak for yourself; and I am sure her mind will not harbour a doubt as to the honesty and innocence of your intentions. It appears to me that you have somewhat mistaken the meaning of her letter, which was not to complain of what you have done, but to prevent you, should expressions of strong complaint from her friends reach your ears, from supposing they expressed her sentiments. I entirely agree with you in your postscript, that it is unwise in her friends to be vehement in their outcry against Lord Byron; and I am sure they receive no encouragement in so doing from her; but you will readily grant that it is not easy for those nearly concerned, who see such an excellent young creature, with all her large fortune and fair prospects, fall a sacrifice to the deliberate, calculating selfishness of a man who only feigned an attachment to her for his own worldly interest, to refrain from the bitterest expressions of indignation. In his poem of the *Dream*, he says he pronounced his marriage vows scarcely knowing what he said, his mind filled with another object. However, who those vehement friends are I don't know, for tho' I am intimate with Lady Byron herself, I am not

[1] This letter from Scott had apparently not been returned to Joanna Baillie, as it is not in Mr. Baillie's collection.

acquainted with any of her relations, Sir Ralph and Lady Noel excepted.

The fire-arms or daggers, kept at night on the table of Lord B.'s bedroom, Lady B. herself made light of, and said that she never supposed they were intended against her, tho' he once pointed a pistol at her with threats. I must not tell you the darkest part of Lord B.'s character, and if I did, you would most likely not believe it. But I will give you one trait of him which I may tell, and must be believed. In those verses upon the poor governess, he represents her as sowing all the mischief between Lady B. and himself. This person never entered his house or had anything to do between them, till Lady B. was confined of her child, and she was then sent for at his sister Mrs. Leigh's desire, to take care of Lady B. Now Lady B. was resolved to separate from him before her confinement, and had taken advice of counsel upon it, at least a month before it, and was advised by counsel to stay in his house if possible, till after her child was born. But the real reason for Lord B. writing these verses was to wound the character of Lady Noel, Lady B.'s mother: a most manly revenge for any displeasure she might have given him! As for the other matter in your postscript regarding pecuniary affairs, it *was* settled before he left England. I thought I had informed you of this; it was very wrong in me not to do so. After refusing for a long time to give up a reasonable part of her fortune[1] for the maintenance of herself and child, he was induced to do it from *fear*, on finding that she was possessed of stronger evidence of such matters as he wished to conceal, than he had been aware of. This

[1] Byron told Medwin that "all I have ever received or am likely to receive (and that has been twice paid back too) was £10,000." When Lady Byron's fortune came into her possession by the death of her mother in 1822, the division of the income was left to arbitrators—Lord Byron being represented by Sir Francis Burdett. — *Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1869.

is a vantage ground which she will always keep for great occasions, tho' trusting to her repugnance to all exposure he will still venture to use the language of a man who has been hardly used. As to his feelings, were they genuine, he could not expose them to the world in the manner he does. That alone would be to me the mark of a hypocritical and vulgar mind. Yes, I say *vulgar*, gifted tho' he be with poetical talents of no ordinary kind. I am but little in company, and hear little of what is said in the world, but last week in a small assembly of literary people, I heard this review mentioned by several people not connected with Lady B. nor knowing that I was even acquainted with her, and they blamed it as an attempt to cast a lustre over vice, which did not become the writer, tho' some allowance might be made for one Poet wishing to help out another. I will say but one thing more on the subject, and then drop it for ever. You have not told me all your reasons for writing this review. It is said in Scotland, "there is nae ganging thro' the warl' without a wee tate o' fauset."[1] Now your "wee tate o' fauset" on this occasion I take to be, that the world of reviewers, rating Lord Byron's works above their real merit (tho' that merit is great), you were afraid by talking of him and them in reasonable terms, to be supposed capable of feeling a degree of envious rivalship. Had you done justice to your own genius, you would not have fallen into this snare: your modesty pleads your excuse. Walter Scott has no rival; and he is little better than a Guse Gibbie not to feel it more assuredly. But I have forgot to say, adverting

[1] Tate or tait, a small particle: fauset from the French *fausseté*; the proverb in this instance signifying that "it is not always politic to write or speak exactly as one thinks or feels on a subject." A little polite dissimulation in fact was considered necessary in "Middle Earth": thus True Thomas in the enchanted Garden of Elfland, where all questions must be answered with absolute sincerity, declines the apple which the Fairy Queen tells him will give him "the tongue that can never lie."—Ballad, *Thomas the Rhymer*.

again to your postscript, what comes from those who may be supposed to be Lady Byron's friends will often make against her; for some of her near relations, who are people of the world—Lady Melbourne, for instance—have always been her worst enemies; while on the other hand, two of her staunch friends are Lord Byron's nearest relations, Capt. Byron and Mr. Wilmot, while his aunt Mrs. Byron always speaks of her in the highest terms. . . .

Since I sat down to write to Mr. Erskine I have received this letter,[1] and shall put it into your cover instead

[1] KIRKBY, *March 5th*, 1817.

MY DEAR MRS. JOANNA,—I should have received unmixed gratification from Mr. Scott's very kind expressions concerning me, had it not been for that misapprehension of my feelings which has occasioned him so much pain. I however hope that a re-consideration of my letter has removed the impression of his having anything to regret in regard to them. If, as appears to me, he may still reason in part from premises which are erroneous, this only adds to my sense of obligation for his most candid opinions of my conduct. I have many scruples about occupying any more of your time or his, yet I do not think that either he or I should feel quite comfortable, were I to be silent or reserved, after his friendly communication. In justification of an opinion, *formed* however independently, I wish to mention that the persons who felt most concern on the subject of that Review were Lord Byron's two nearest male relations, Mr. Wilmot and Capt. Byron—both men of integrity and judgment, and they had personal opportunities of thoroughly investigating the motives of Lord Byron's conduct towards me, and of mine towards him. They are therefore a little impatient (not sympathising exactly with my feelings) when it is supposed that any apprehensions of irritability, or the provocation of a casual estrangement could have induced me to leave for ever a husband whose "hatred of hypocrisy" and "inborn generosity" must surely preclude the ideas of treating a woman with studied cruelty, and of sacrificing her to vindictive pride and selfish calculation. I confess *I* could not uphold the character of such a wife. Sir James Burgess (an acquaintance of Mr. Scott's), particularly represented me in that light, with the addition of external influence over me, having given credit to Lord Byron's story and circulated it. He has since acknowledged the error, which was to be in part excused by his not being admitted into *our* confidence. *We* had wished to keep the business entirely private. After it was made public, I never consented to give any currency to the knowledge of my deepest wrongs; therefore, I should be the more inconsistent were I to "complain" of the consequences of that voluntary reserve; on the contrary, I have to acknowledge an experience of kindness

of my epistle to him. Had I received it sooner, I should not have troubled you with many things which I have mentioned in my letter.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

March 17th [EDINBURGH, 1817].

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have been so very ill since I wrote to you, that all around expected to have seen the last of me. On Tuesday 4th, I had dined at Dalkeith, and finding myself rather unwell, I declined to stay all night, which is my usual custom in that hospitable family. When I came home and got to bed I had a severe attack of the cramp, which kept Mrs. Scott up all night, and gave me exquisite torment. Yet on the Wednesday, after lying in bed till two o'clock—a thing so unusual with me that I cannot remember having had occasion to do so for thirty years—I thought I might get up to receive some friends of my sister-in-law. She had come from Canada on a visit to us, and was to leave us the next day, so I could not think of breaking up a little family party. About nine o'clock, however, pain grew too violent for my stoicism; when put to bed (having broken up the good meeting with most admired disorder) my stomach rejected every species of medicine, and an inflammation taking place, the men

beyond what could be sanctioned by the aspect under which circumstances have been generally presented.

Lastly, if ever that change should take place which would in my opinion render the exertions of a true and disinterested friend available to Lord Byron's welfare, I should feel very much disposed to offer Mr. Scott such aid from my acquired knowledge on some points, as might contribute towards making his zeal and abilities more effective. I do not say this from any view to *united* advantage—those prospects can never be restored. Mr. Scott will nevertheless believe that I shall always remember with grateful regard those who have stretched forth an arm to save Lord Byron. . . .

With my most affectionate remembrance and the best thanks I can give, I conclude yours ever,

A. T. BYRON.

Pray use your own judgment about communicating the contents of this to Mr. Scott, but if suppressed, pray convey my thanks in the warmest terms.

of art had recourse to profuse bleeding and liberal blistering; this brought the disease to reason after about four-and-twenty hours, much of which was spent in such acute agony that what intervals of rest intervened felt like the sleep of the poor Indian during the intermission of his tortures. The medical gentlemen used me as monarchs do a rebellious province, and levied such exactions on my blood and bones, as I shall not forget in a hurry, I promise you. My head is still as giddy as a top, and I have been for three or four days endeavouring to get rid of the consequence of the remedies. I assure you I consider the event as a warning, and a lesson to keep—as my old riding-master used to say—my horse well in hand, and be prepared, as well as I may, for the tremendous HALT, which must one day stop the career. Two *remarkables* struck me in my illness: the first was, that my great wolf-dog . . . clamour'd wildly and fearfully about my bed when I was very ill, and would hardly be got out of the room; the other, that when I was recovering, all acquired and *factitious* tastes seemed to leave me, and I could eat nothing but porridge, and listen to no better reading than a stupid Scottish diary which would have made a whole man sick. . . . I will not trust myself to say anything on the subject of Lady Byron's letter, but I feel a great deal. I must say I never heard any one say anything to her disparagement, though several have endeavoured to palliate and apologise for Lord Byron's conduct—all Whigs, by the way. I wish I had been born and bred a Whig—it is a saving faith which cloaks many an error; but this will vex you, who need wear no cloak yourself, and therefore cannot think how convenient it might be for other folks. I have a letter from friend Morritt (a great friend of Lady B.'s, by the way), with this postscript:—"People here swear you wrote the review on Lord B. in the *Quarterly*; you get great credit by it; I hope it is

true. At least it contains your sentiments more than those of most others I meet with, and it does credit to your good-humour." Now Morritt (who is "Downright Dunstable") would not have let this sentence slip him, if he could have dream'd of the review injuring Lady B. So I am much cheered about this cursed blunder. I will lay up your letter and Lady Byron's with much care; the time may come, when we are all dead and gone for many a day, when it may be interesting to some one.[1]

To a better subject—your own poems—I am delighted to hear of your labours, and particularly at your taking up the touching story of Lady Grizzel, with which I have been familiar from my infancy from the misfortunes of my own 'forebears.' My mother's maternal grandfather was Sir John Swinton of Swinton, who was an exile in Holland at the same time with Lord Marchmont, and my mother, who is, thank God, still well and hearty, tells many of the singular occurrences as if she had been there herself. Lady Diana Scott, daughter of the last Earl of Marchmont (Pope's friend), is alive and equally communicative, and from some other family connections being far too fatally connected with these State plots, I have heard a great deal about them, and could almost paint Lady Grizzel.

[1] Byron married Miss Milbanke, 2nd January 1815, their daughter was born December 10, his wife left him for her father's house, January 15th, 1816. Their legal separation was completed on April 22, and Byron left Britain on April 25th, never to return. Efforts on the part of friends to reconcile them were unsuccessful. Byron died in 1824, and his widow in 1860. For many years Lady Byron maintained a dignified silence as to the cause of their separation; but in 1830 she printed a reply to Moore's *Life of the Poet*, which is now bound up with the 6th vol. of the octavo edition without comment. In Lady Byron's later years she seems to have brooded over her wrongs until they took possession of her as monomaniacal delusions. Those who care for more information will find it in two articles in the *Quarterly Review* (vols. 127 and 128) (1869-1870); and for Scott's generous and judicious criticism, which was the cause of the letters here printed, readers are referred to the *Quarterly Review*, vol. xvi. pp. 172-208, as it is not included in Scott's collected works.

I will be delighted to see how you will treat this beautiful tale of domestic generosity and distress.[1] . . . I deny what you allege of your unpopularity; your name stands with the highest, and above most who are accounted such, for strength and originality of genius. I never heard this disputed by any one whose opinion I would give a farthing for. . . . The grasshopper is still a burthen to me, and I feel tired and giddy with making black lines on white paper. . . .—Ever affectionately yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO TERRY.

EDINBURGH, 29*th March* 1817.

MY DEAR TERRY,—The plans and measurements for the iron beams arrived safely. I have just expedited them to Paterson. I have been prevented from going to Abbotsford partly by the death of one of my brethren of office, whose duty devolves on my shoulders until his successor's commission is signed by the Prince Regent, partly by some recurrence of my vile spasms, with an oppressive pain in my chest and other inconveniences. These are ugly twinges, as your friend Lord Ogleby[2] says; but such things come when youth goes and strength wanes. I am, however, as anxious about my hall as if it were to be for ages my dwelling-place, and thank you kindly for the interest you take in it. I intend to be at Abbotsford for certain on Saturday, 10th May, so that if I get the result of your Sunday's deliberation any day next week I shall have the opportunity to talk it over on the spot with my operative friends, which will be the greatest possible convenience. I shall not, I fear, get out again till after the 12th July,—*avis au lecteur*, which *avis* intimates that the sooner I can get the advice of my counsel learned in the laws of taste the

[1] The Legend of Lady Griseld Baillie.—See *Metrical Legends*, 1821.

[2] Colman's *Clandestine Marriage*.

more likely I am to profit by them. . . . I should like whatever of the woodwork requires care done either here or in London. My honest neighbours of Galashiels are excellent masons, and have been, since the building of Melrose, but very sorry carpenters. I therefore joyfully acquiesce in having the windows furnished in London, as far as they may be supposed to require any particular neatness and care. Staircase and bedroom windows I suppose we may find here, as the expense of packing, carriage, etc., would be very great in proportion to any advantage which could be desired. I am going to despatch to Messrs. Longman a small packet for Mr. Atkinson containing a set of my poetical labours. He will probably wonder at the disproportioned size of my poems and my house, but I have Ariosto's excuse: words are more easily put together than bricks. I sought everywhere to make up a large-paper set, but it is quite impossible, and after all it is the *ex dono* which can alone give value to the volumes.

I would like, when your counsels are so far settled, to know what articles should be finished in London, which here. I understand the second (that is, the parlour) story of the house is well on. I thought of making the balcony in front of the house a verandah of cast iron; the bars will of course be covered with painted boards, which will be removed in the winter season. Little advantage would arrive from making it of [wrought] iron, which would be expensive, and I think heavy. I have some thoughts of adopting the gas-lights should I find on an accurate inquiry that they emit no smell. . . . Now suppose I do adopt this mode of lighting, I intend to have the principal rails of my balustrade cast hollow, and to finish at top with a *fleur de lys* or thistle with burners. Along the bottom will be a tube of communication, which on any rejoicing occasion can be filled with gas, and lighting the burners at the top of the rails you have an extempore illumination at pleasure. I say

this is a whim that floats about my head with other whims, and waits for some breeze of approbation to drive it ashore. I have some other things to write to you about, but the business of the session and this cursed pain in my breast is inimical to a prolonged correspondence. I trust I will soon get rid of both. . . . I have made some progress in *Ye ken what*,[1] but not to my satisfaction; it smells of the cramp, and I must get it into better odour before sending it to you.—Most truly yours, WALTER SCOTT.

TO THE SAME.

[*May* 1817.]

. . . WERE you to see Abbotsford now it would confirm you in your vocation of planting groves and plantations, for our labours begin now to make a distinguished appearance, and every year will add to them. The banks next the house are allowed to have thriven faster than any in this country, and make some show, though only between four and five years planted. The Counsellor[2] slipp'd through my fingers like a knotless thread through muslin, so I had no opportunity to charge him with special greetings. . . . That you may not think us altogether strangers to the drama here, I will enclose you by the first parcel a couple of bills for the theatre at Melrose, being for the *Lady of the Lake* and *Guy Mannering*. By the way, Liston's *Dominie*[3] is a very fine thing, and does him infinite credit. I saw him for a second behind the scenes. I am delighted to hear Mrs. Terry is restored to health and to the occupations she understands so well, but do not let it amount to fagging. The little pickaninny has my kindest wishes. They grow up on us fast these young sprouts; mine you would hardly know, the girls are fast becoming young women. Walter is

[1] *Rob Roy*, published in December.
[2] W. Erskine, Lord Kinnedder.
[3] As Dominie Sampson on the Edinburgh stage in April.

taller than I am by an inch; he is a most beautiful horseman, and I resign my yeomanry saddle and broadsword to him this summer, as I do not get on horseback once in a month.

> "The eldridge knight gave up his arms
> With many a pitiful sigh!"

However, people must grow old or die, which is the best apology I have for folks declining in activity or strength. . . . Hamlet (*ci devant* Marmion) turns out a most beautiful dog, and to judge from his activity in puppyhood will maintain the honours of his illustrious descent.—Yours truly, W. S.

TO THE DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH.

ABBOTSFORD, 11*th May* 1817.

MY DEAR LORD DUKE,—It was with equal pain and surprise that I yesterday learn'd the melancholy loss which your Grace and your family have sustained in the loss of my much regretted friend, Lady Douglas,—a loss which life cannot easily fill up; for where are we to look for so much sound sense and penetrating judgment, joined to such powers of fancy and kindness of disposition, or for wit so happily blended with gentleness and good-humour? When I last saw her we parted in a place of public amusement, and with the hope on my part that I should soon enjoy her society for two or three days in the ensuing summer. And now I learn, that with all who knew her, I must regret her as lost to us during the reign of time. As we advance in life, and those whom we most honour and value are snatched from us by unexpected strokes of fate, it requires some reflexion not to form a conclusion that the best and worthiest are earliest called home, and to tremble for the friends whom life yet holds among us. But it is not so; the same doom waits us all, and these

strokes seem most frequent only because they are most impressive, and because, while we should hear with comparative indifference the loss of those less marked by worth and talents, the death of one so much distinguished by both as Lady Douglas seems to form a landmark and an era in our life, from which all who were distinguished by her friendship are to begin a new career, deprived of what afforded pleasure to their past journey in proportion to the intimacy which they had the happiness to hold with her. It is now many years since Lady Douglas honoured me with her regard, and such was my respect for her good opinion that I feel I shall have an object fewer in any task I may in future undertake, since I can no longer look forward to the approbation she so often and so kindly conferred. . . .

TO JOHN RICHARDSON.

EDINBURGH, MONDAY, 19*th May* 1817.

MY DEAR RICHARDSON,—Many thanks for your kind remembrances and the pleasant prospect they give me of seeing you in summer. I am always bringing you trouble, and what is worse, inefficient trouble, and I fear the romantic circumstance which I am going to apprise you of will be only another draught on your benevolent patience. But it is a story in which you will be somewhat interested, and I will give it to you at length.

About two years ago, a man in the extremity of poverty and distress applied to me for *work*. He had ten children, he said, and was nearly starving. Finding that his character was good, I *did* employ him in such work as his exhausted strength permitted him to undertake, and having been bred a nurseryman, he was able to do many little things, though not in Tom Purdie's phrase "to work a day's work." It seemed to me that this poor devil was

really marked out for a butt for misfortune to shoot at. He fell on the ice at one time and injured himself greatly; at another he had a slow fever; at a third a rock fell on him from the quarry, and nearly smashed his hand off; and the scarlatina has been perpetually wrestling with one or other of his ten children—one down, t'other come on. The very servants called him *par excellence* "the poor creature." I do not know whether fortune has reserved, as a final blow, to hold out to him a Pisgah prospect of great wealth, and then puff the vision away, or whether she intends to make a real *fortunate youth* out of poor Aitken, but there is a large property of an intestate merchant of London in which there seems to be a considerable chance of this man having some interest. The father of this man had a younger brother bred a gardener, and who left this country early for the West Indies. His name was George Aitken, and my pauper says that he is named after him. He returned to London a great many years since, certainly much above twenty, wrote to his brother from London more than once, and sent them a trunk with presents. But none of these letters have been preserved, though perhaps should it prove worth while, something might be found out concerning them; and I believe the existence of George Aitken and his departure for the West Indies, also the fact of his returning and settling in London, could be established. This however would be a very imperfect step towards proving the identity of my labourer's uncle with the defunct. I hope you will be able by looking over the enclosed letter to me from my very sensible Sheriff-Clerk, Andrew Lang, to obtain without much trouble the information which he points at, and I will reimburse any of the necessary expenses. As the body is under my banner, I would not like him to lose any right which he may actually possess, at least for want of a little inquiry.

Many thanks to you for your classical efforts on behalf of John Kemble.[1] I am informed the medallion is most beautiful. I hope we shall soon have some merry days on Tweedside.—Ever yours most truly, WALTER SCOTT.

TO MORRITT.

EDINBURGH, 27*th May* 1817.

MY DEAR MORRITT,—I have been pretty well, thanks to your kind interest and inquiry,—I might say *very* well but for an attack of the cramp, which I had in consequence of eating butter-milk with my oatmeal porridge, but I soon got over it, and shall take it for a warning to meddle as little with acids as I possibly can. I suppose this gave rise to a report that I had had a relapse, which fortunately has not been the case. I spent about a month at Abbotsford,—cold backward weather, and the young plantations suffering for lack of rain: we have had a fine seed-time, however, and please God to send us warm weather we may look for a good crop, an event to be devoutly prayed for.

Pray let me have your pamphlet on the Poor-rates, so soon as it is out. It is an Augean stable; it is the very canker in the bosom of the country, and no small claim will he have on the gratitude of Old England who can suggest a practical remedy. In general, I think you English, both in high and low degree, stand rather too much isolated, and too much detached from connections and relationship. I own this makes some of the finest points in your national character,—your high spirit of independence, your freedom from prejudice and partial counsel, and the free exercise of your judgment on all occasions, without fear or favour. But I think it has corresponding inconveniences.

[1] Regarding a snuff-box presented to Kemble by his admirers in Edinburgh.

In Scotland men of all ranks, but especially the middling and the lower classes, are linked together by ties which give them a strong interest in each other's success in life, and it is amazing the exertion which men will make to support and assist persons with whom you would suppose them connected by very remote ties of consanguinity, and by no other link whatever. They have in the lower ranks a wholesome horror of seeing a relation on the Poors' roll of the parish; it is a dishonour to them in all cases, and if they are in close relationship, as parent and child, or brother and sister, it is such a blot on their moral character, that the Communion has been refused to those who, having the means, did not prevent such a circumstance. Hence, in most parts of Scotland, Poor-rates are not very grievous, but in those abominable manufacturing districts they are little better than English, without English independence to make amends for this hard-heartedness. It is evident also that Poor-rates, when the recurrence to their assistance becomes matter of common course, strike at the very root of industry and providence; for if you do not give Hob parish assistance till he has not a crown left, Hob will be a great fool if he works for more than he can help, or spends a farthing less than his whole wages by the time Saturday night comes round. This is a sad temptation, and I do not well see how it can be done away. I have been attending practically to the effects of the various modes fallen upon to employ the poor, and I think I see some of them are of a kind to make irreparable havoc with their habits of industry, notwithstanding the excellent intentions of those by whom they were promoted. For instance, a large subscription was raised in Edin^{r} by means of which 100 or 200 men were set to make a walk round the Calton. To prevent persons from coming to be employed on this job who could get work elsewhere, the wages were fixed so low as 10d. and a shilling, with

some extra allowance to those who had families. But so far were they from feeling grateful for this species of assistance, that they seemed unanimously to agree, 1st, that the wages were mere charity, and therefore dishonourable to the acceptors; 2d, that the rate of wages (considering their pay as such) was an imposition upon them; 3d, that it was a *bonus* or *solatium* paid to them by the gentry, to prevent their rising and righting themselves at the expense of the aristocracy. And with these various views of the transaction, I declare to you that one good labourer whose heart was in his task would have wrought harder than any of those grumbling *fainéants*; and when young fellows were so employed, I consider their education to be as much improved as if they had been working a turn with the convicts. These observations refer, it is true, to the mob of a corrupted and large city. But it is evident to me, that unless you can make it the interest of labourers to exert themselves, and make what we call a day's work, they acquire very bad habits by being employed in this manner, and that the best way is to allot the work to them by the piece, taking care not to fix it so low but what an industrious man might make wages of it. The man then works with his whole heart and strength, and reaps the benefit of his labours, or if that benefit prove to be small, he has at least maintained the habit of honest and *bona fide* labour.

I need not say how much I sympathise with you on the subject of Lady Douglas's death,—to me a most unexpected event. She was at Dalkeith in the second week of March, and came to Edin^r^ to see Kean. I handed her to her carriage, and thus we parted at the door of a place of public amusement, not to meet again on this side of eternity. So does this transitory world glide away from under us with all its pleasures and enjoyments. I dare not write to Lady Louisa, and yet I must, after I see the Buccleuch

family, which will be this day. I am well aware what a cruel blow she has sustained; indeed it seems to me, that of all the persons I have known, Lady Louisa has been most frequently under affliction from the loss of friends; rarely out of mourning, and formed too for suffering so acutely under these recurring blows. . . .

As for Jedediah,

"The creature's at his dirty work again."

But all this I will write to you about another time.[1] I sincerely hope to get over the march to Rokeby this season, which I may do the more easily as the workmen will make residence at Abbotsford [disagreeable]. *Nota bene*, most of this letter was written on Wednesday last. Charlotte and all the bairns salute you. Walter gets another dog to assist Trout, conditionally that he learns his Tacitus thoroughly against the 12th of August.—Believe me most truly yours, WALTER SCOTT.

TO THE DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH.

EDINR., *9th July* 1817.

MY DEAR LORD,—I have an unexpected opportunity of augmenting my retinue to Drumlanrig with no less a person than the renown'd Adam Ferguson. As I know very few men that possess equally the powers of giving and receiving amusement, and as your Grace seemed as if you would like to see a little more of him, I will be disposed to embrace this opportunity of making him better known to you, unless anything should render another time more convenient. It is not prudent to *prôner* any one whom we desire should be agreeable, but I think I am pretty sure of my card in the present instance, otherwise I would not lay it down (for I deny the

[1] *Rob Roy*, 3 vols., was published in December 1817.

American visitor). Besides, the father of the said Adam (the celebrated philosopher and historian) was always a welcome guest at Dalkeith.

On Monday, I propose to be on the Braes of Glenfalloch at the head of Loch Lomond, and on Wednesday steer my course towards Drumlanrig with my wife, Sophia, and the aforesaid Adam.

I am sure your Grace will acquit me of any wish to thrust my own friends upon you, but I really wish you to see this singular person, although I should lose my reputation (as I flatter myself I possess some) of being *senteur* and *diseur* in ordinary to the House of Buccleuch, as well as their born minstrel and devoted friend. I have just seen Maconochie, who insinuates hopes. But Mac was always sanguine, and I hardly dare trust myself to think on the probability of my arriving when your Grace has had the news of being really Lord of Linne, and free to cut and carve and mark your line of enclosure. . . .

I have a humble request for your Grace, if you can gain the lawsuit, which, as Satchells says,[1] ought to be the better for all poor friends—

> "It is not gowd, it is not gear,
> It is not lands, nor far nor near,"

but it is a draught on your patience, as well as your purse, and is nothing less than your picture to hang in my long room at Abbotsford, now building,

> "To shine the bright palladium of the place."

Pray think of this; you should sit for your own family, and a copy will gratify me beyond description.—Ever your Grace's truly obliged, WALTER SCOTT.

[1] Captain Walter Scott's *True History of Several Honourable Families*, 4to. Edinburgh, 1688.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

DRUMLANRIG CASTLE, *July* 24, 1817.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Many thanks for your kind letter, which follow'd me hither from Edinburgh. I had a recurrence of my spasmodic attacks in the stomach, though I am a good boy and do upon the whole as Dr. Baillie was so kind to recommend. Since the rise of our Courts, I have been at liberty to take a little tour, and to make a little run up to the head of Loch Lomond, which I feel myself much the better for, as my life in Edinburgh is necessarily very sedentary. I have been for some time with my chief in this magnificent old castle, where one would require a plan to guide you from tower to tower, gallery to gallery. The late Duke of Queensberry cut down the magnificent woods which once surrounded Drumlanrig, but there are already four hundred acres replanted, and the Duke proposes to extend them to upwards of a thousand. At his various seats this hard winter he has employ'd daily upwards of nine hundred and forty labourers, at the expense of £70 per day. This is something better than hoarding useless thousands, or squandering them in profuse living, or losing them at games of hazard. . . .

Sophia is much honour'd and obliged by your remembrance, which she deserves as far as gratitude for your kindness can render her worthy of it; she will not, I think, be much taller, but she has great health and spirits and a very good temper. My son Walter . . . I have some thoughts of taking with me to France and Italy next year, if I can make out a long projected tour in those countries; methinks I will not die quite happy without having seen somewhat of that Rome of which I have read so much. This year promises a fine harvest, and the poor folks are particularly favoured in a copious supply of the finest

potatoes, which, if our good weather continues, will be soon in the market. They merit all this, for their distress has been extreme, and they may be said to deserve it, for generally speaking they have borne severe privations with great patience. On Saturday night I will be at my poor kingdom of Abbotsford, where I hope to find my subjects rejoicing at the expected return of plenty. The pasture grass is far more plentiful than I ever observed before, so that there is a profusion of verdure upon the hills and the meadows which belongs to a better climate than poor auld Scotland. I send you this disjointed chat amidst a great clamour of preparation among the young and the old for a sally to some remote place among the hills, where we are to dine on the turf. What would I give that you were with us, only they are singing so many Jacobite songs that it is thought the full-length pictures of King William and Queen Mary, which hang in the ante-room, will walk out of their frames like that in the Castle of Otranto, and march off in their royal robes to some mansion where their canvas ears may avoid being shock'd with such sounds. I beg my kindest compliments to Mrs. A. Baillie, the kind Doctor and his lady, whose MS. of *Columbus* is so beautifully distinct, in all which my wife and Sophia cordially join. I am sorry Lady Byron does not extend her tour to Scotland,[1] as somehow or other I might perhaps have been useful to her, which would have given me particular pleasure. I trust and hope she would not have refused me the opportunity of being so had such occurred.

I think Miss Edgeworth's last work delightful,[2] though Jews will always be to me Jews. One does not naturally and easily combine with their habits and pursuits any great liberality of principle, although certainly it may, and I believe does, exist in many individual instances. They are

[1] Lady Byron after all extended her tour to Scotland and visited Scott at Abbotsford in August.

[2] *Harrington* and *Ormond*.

money-makers and money-brokers by profession, and it is a trade which narrows the mind. I own I breathed more freely when I found Miss Montenero was not an actual Jewess. The second tale, *Ormond*, is excellent, and King Corny one of those inimitable sketches which Miss Edgeworth alone can draw. The dramatic tales I did not quite so much admire; they wanted, from the very plan, that variety of description which Miss E. throws into her narrations. But the Irish-Scotch is most excellent. I would have liked to have written the Scotch military musician for her in the last drama; he wants a spice of our peculiar nationality. But whips crack, wheels rattle, dogs bay, and all is in motion, so I must close up the 'Kiver' while I can get Borthwickbrae to frank it.—Ever, my dear friend, most truly yours, W. Scott.

FROM FRANCIS JEFFREY.

Edinr., 1*st August* 1817.

My dear Scott,—Is there anything very absurd or improper in my asking whether you might not be induced to write a short account of our friend C. Sharpe's late publication[1] for the *Edinburgh Review*? My motive for asking is chiefly, no doubt, my firm persuasion that you could make a better article with very little trouble to yourself than anybody else could do with a great deal; but that feeling would scarcely have encouraged me to hazard the proposal did I not think that your friendship for the editor, or author rather, might dispose you to give him a lift even in our quarter, and that you still entertain such sentiments towards me as at least to excuse readily anything that might imply too great a presumption on your kindness. I think the book extremely curious and entertaining, and

[1] *The Secret and True History of the Church of Scotland*, by the Rev. James Kirkton, etc., edited by C. K. Sharpe, Edinburgh, 4to, 1817.

the notes, though far too Jacobitical for me, full of talent and information.

If you should feel any dislike to be known to write in the *Edinburgh Review*, I can easily keep your secret, and there are many people, though I am not of the number, who think that your style does not unmask you. Pray do not hastily refuse, if you feel any movement of inclination to comply, and at all events let me know that you have pardoned the liberty I take in making the application.

I rejoice sincerely to hear that you are quite stout, and enjoying your woods and rivers as well at least as any of the Abbots, your predecessors.—Believe me always very faithfully yours, F. JEFFREY.

TO FRANCIS JEFFREY.[1]

ABBOTSFORD, 5*th August* 1817.

MY DEAR JEFFREY,—I flatter myself it will not require many protestations to assure you with what pleasure I would undertake any book that can give you pleasure; but in the present case I am hampered by two circumstances: one, that I promised Gifford a review of this very Kirkton for the *Quarterly*; the other, that I shall certainly be unable to keep my word with him.[2] I am obliged to take exercise three or four hours in the forenoon and two after dinner, to keep off the infernal spasms which since last winter have attacked me with such violence, as if all the imps that used to plague poor Caliban were washing, wringing, and ironing the unshapely but useful bag which Sir John Sinclair treats with such distinction—my stomach, in short. Now, as I have much to do of my own, I fear I can hardly be of use to you in the present case, which I am very sorry for, as I like the subject, and would be

[1] Printed in Appendix to Cockburn's *Life of Jeffrey*, vol. i. pp. 417-8.

[2] Scott mentioned to Murray in March that he had laid aside the article on Kirkton for the *Quarterly Review* half finished.

pleased to give my own opinion respecting the Jacobitism of the editor, which, like my own, has a good spice of affectation in it, mingled with some not unnatural feelings of respect for a cause which, though indefensible in common sense and ordinary policy, has a great deal of high-spirited Quixotry about it.

Can you not borrow from your briefs and criticism a couple of days to look about you here? I dare not ask Mrs. Jeffrey till next year, when my hand will be out of the mortar-tub; and at present my only spare bed was till of late but accessible by the feudal accommodation of a drawbridge made of two deals, and still requires the clue of Ariadne. Still however there it is, and there is an obliging stage-coach called the Blucher, which sets down my guests within a mile of my mansion (at Melrose, bridge-end) three times a week, and restores them to their families in like manner after five hours' travelling. I am like one of Miss Edgeworth's heroines, master of all things in miniature—a little hill, and a little glen, and a little horse-pond of a loch, and a little river, I was going to call it,—the Tweed; but I remember the minister was mobbed by his parishioners for terming it, in his statistical report, an inconsiderable stream. So pray do come and see me, and if I can stead you, or pleasure you, in the course of the winter, you shall command me.[1] As I bethink me, I can contrive a bachelor bed for Thomson or Jo. Murray, if either of them will come with you; and if you ride, I have plenty of hay and corn, and a bed for your servant.—Ever yours affectionately,

Walter Scott.

[1] The result of this application was an article ("the first for ten years and written for the love of Jeffrey") in the *Edinburgh* for June 1818 on Maturin's *Women*.

FROM FRANCIS JEFFREY.

CRAIGCROOK, 14*th October* 1817.

MY DEAR SCOTT,—I have left your kind letter so long unanswered that I have no right to your implicit belief when I say that I have seldom received any letter which afforded me so much gratification, or any invitation I was so eager to accept. The truth is, however, that when it arrived I was in a state of high perplexity about going to Ireland, and was unwilling to answer it till I could see the result, and that project was scarcely blown up when I was hurried away, partly by business and partly by folly, to the Highlands,—from which I only returned three days ago,—and have talked of nothing but paying you a visit ever since. I had at one time engaged to go to-day with Thomson, but that was first stopped by poor Henry Erskine's funeral (from which I am just returned), and then by the intelligence that you were yourself coming to Edinburgh for a day or two, to-day or to-morrow. I send this, therefore, to your house in Castle Street, just to say that if you are to be at home, and will be generous enough to receive me any time after next Saturday, I shall be delighted to spend a day with you on the banks of the Tweed. If you could possibly spare me an afternoon *here* before that day, for which I am inextricably engaged, I need not say how happy it would make Mrs. J. and me; but I am aware how unlikely it is that *you* should have any hour disengaged in so short a visit. In the meantime, and at all events, allow me to offer you my most hearty and grateful thanks for the indulgent and most friendly manner in which you received my very venturesome request, and for the hopes you even allow me to entertain that it may hereafter be substantially granted. I am more proud a great deal of the personal goodwill to which I am resolved to ascribe this gracious reply, than I should be of

the compliments of half the peerage, and can only say that I think I have partly merited it by having invariably relied on it under circumstances that are not always extremely encouraging.—Believe me always, dear Scott, your obliged and faithful servant, F. JEFFREY.

Send your answer to George St.

TO JOHN RICHARDSON.

ABBOTSFORD, 28*th Sept.* 1817.

CERTAIN affairs which you know of have turned out so amazingly profitable as to have enabled me to make considerable additions to this little property, and to undertake a still further extension of my wings, which will probably soon flap the Eildon Hills. This has given me many delightful walks and much important and active employment, which is no small object at a period of life when country business suits one better than country sports. Yet think not but what I still course and burn the water;[1] the gun I have resigned to Walter, who is a very successful sportsman, and comes home loaded with grouse, blackcock, and partridges. If I thought it would come safe by the Carlisle coach, I would beg Mrs. R.'s kind acceptance of some game: a black-cock from the Rhymer's Glen would shine in the second course in Fludyer Street.

When you see Tom Campbell, tell him, with my best love, that I have to thank him for making me known to Mr. Washington Irving, who is one of the best and pleasantest acquaintances I have made this many a day. He stayed two or three days with me, and I hope to see him again.—Ever, dear Richardson, yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

[1] "Burning the water"—*i.e.* spearing salmon by night.

FROM WASHINGTON IRVING.[1]

HAWICK, *Sept.* 23, 1817.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have been excessively disappointed in not meeting with you yesterday. It was not my intention to have intruded again on your hospitality, for I had heard in Edinburgh how much your time has been engaged by company of late, but I could not feel satisfied to leave Scotland without once more seeing you. I had hoped to have had that pleasure at Jedburgh, but was most provokingly detained all day at Melrose for want of a chaise, so as not to reach Jedburgh until after your departure. I can only then take farewell of you by letter, which I do with a heart full of the warmest sentiments of regard. Surrounded as you are by friends among the most intelligent and illustrious, the goodwill of an individual like myself cannot be a matter of much importance, yet I feel a gratification in expressing it, and in assuring you that I shall consider the few days I passed with you and your amiable family as among the choicest of my life.

My tour in the Highlands was delightful. The weather was as fine as could be desired, and the scenery beyond my expectations. Indeed, everything has conduced to make my Scottish excursion one of the most charming I ever made. I have met with nothing but agreeable people and agreeable incidents; and I return with a heart stored with golden recollections for after years.

Mr. MacDonald Buchanan was not at home when we came over Loch Lomond, so that I did not call at Ross Priory, but I had the satisfaction of meeting with him at Mr. Jeffrey's a few days since.

I cannot but express my satisfaction, on calling at your

[1] Washington Irving had been at Abbotsford from August 30th to September 3rd, 1817, and he made a farewell call after his Highland tour on his way south in September.

house yesterday, at being welcomed by my old friend Hamlet, and at learning that he and his fellow-culprit, Hector, had been reprieved from the "Tyburn Tree," and a pony bought for their amusement and reformation. I felt so much interested by every moving thing in your establishment that I should have grieved had any of them met with disaster.[1]

Whether I shall ever have the pleasure of again seeing you is a matter of extreme uncertainty, for when once separated in this wide world, who can tell if they will ever be jostled together again; but wherever I go I shall bear with me the warmest wishes for the happiness of yourself and your family.

Present my sincere remembrances to Mrs. Scott and the young people, and believe me, my dear sir, very faithfully your friend, Washington Irving.

TO JOANNA BAILLIE.

Parliament House, *Dec.* 12, 1817.

My dear Friend,—If I were not a bankrupt as a correspondent, I ought to begin with a thousand apologies for my ungracious silence to the kind correspondent whose friendship I so much value; but I have been so long and so often a defaulter in this way, that I think nothing I could say would mend the matter, and so I shall "e'en let

[1] Hamlet was the black greyhound—"the warder of the castle"—who gave Irving a noisy reception. What crime the dogs had committed to merit such a severe sentence is unknown,—possibly dangerous 'coquetting with sheep'—but that they had been forgiven is shown by Scott's remarks to Terry a few days later:—

"Hamlet, *ci-devant* Marmion, promises most capitally: he is a bold, fine dog, more healthy than I ever saw any of the Newmarket breed, and runs most capitally: he has killed several hares already. He is, moreover, a very funny and amiable fellow, and is at this moment gnawing my shoe latchets, so you see he is in full possession of the fireside."

See Irving's *Life and Letters*, vol. i. pp. 318-322, etc., also *Abbotsford and Newstead*, London, 1835.

the flee stick in the wa'." I cannot give you so good an account of my health as you, I know, would like to hear. My spasms have been frequent and violent, especially since the weather set in moist and dark, but they have only once come to such a height as to render the use of the lancet necessary, as in spring; so I think, on the whole, the complaint may be mitigating its rigour. So runs the world away: in youth we seek pleasure, and in manhood fame, and fortune, and distinction, and when we feel the advance of years, we would willingly compound for quiet and freedom from pain. But I should be very ungrateful were I to complain loudly, for I know no one who has enjoy'd so many years of uninterrupted good health as has fallen to my lot, and so I will e'en submit to the bad health which Heaven may be pleased to send me. About our dear Miss Edgeworth and her very interesting communications, I never saw the criticisms she mentions, but I am sure if they mention'd my name along with hers, I should feel that they did me the highest degree of honour, and I am sure I can venture to say as much for the anonymous author of the novels, supposing that his modesty and good sense bear some proportion to the talents he has display'd. . . . Do say all you can that is kind on my part to Miss Edgeworth, whose genius honours us all, as her gentleness and modesty honour her genius. I am delighted to hear that her father's life is to appear: under her hands it cannot fail to be a model of its kind. Did I tell you how much I was delighted with *King Corny*? Sophia says I am partial to him for the great authority he affords for *roaring* when folks are in actual agony.[1] I have been intending to write to Miss E. ever since I came from France, and I have a half-written letter to shew that my good intentions were not wholly ineffectual, tho' interrupted:

[1] See Miss Edgeworth's story of *Ormond*.

certainly, I will not go down to the grave with this sin of ingratitude on my head, for after all it is only base sloth that makes me fall behind in this sort of engagement. I am much more irregular as a correspondent since my children are grown into companions. There is a song, or a lesson, or a something or other going on after tea, until "it draws towards supper in conclusion,"[1] and away go the two or three hours used for letter-writing. With respect to your views of publishing, I never advise the actual sale of copyrights. . . . I don't know anything that would please me more, except to learn you were bringing forth another volume of plays, and I will always live in hopes that you will not altogether desert that splendid branch of literature, in which no one can hold the candle to you. . . . The Bacchanalian song says there is no drinking in the grave,[2] and neither are there laurels to give or to be worn, and the planting them over those whose better parts are far beyond such vanities is but a melancholy, though a grateful, task. The applause and honour of our contemporaries is like a feast, to which the author is invited as a guest: that of our successors is like the entertainments which the ancients spread on their tombs for the refreshment of the departed spirits.

I am very glad to hear of Lady Byron being well in health, and she would have little to vex her were she as agreeably situated as I could wish her. Should she be a visitor of Scotland next year, I might hope to detain her longer on Tweedside. By the way, Lord Somerville (the only person she saw at Abbotsford, so far as I remember) was an accidental, and in some respects a self-invited, guest. We live so near each other, that we are much in the habit of unceremonious visits, especially on his part, as he is a single man, and

[1] *King John*, Act i. sc. 1.

[2] See Nanty Ewart's song in *Redgauntlet*, *W. N.*, xxxvi. p. 142.

naturally disposed to seek society when the sports of the day are over. He expressed himself so anxious to pay his respects to Lady B., as an old friend of her family, that there would have been a sort of affectation in not asking him to come to his dinner; this was the history of our having any one except our family when we had the honour of receiving Lady B.[1] . . . My wife and Sophia beg all kind and affectionate remembrances to you, Mrs. A. Baillie, the Dr. and his Lady, and all friends.—Ever, my dear Mrs. Baillie, most truly yours, WALTER SCOTT.

[1] On Oct. 22nd Joanna Baillie wrote to Scott: "I am glad you were so much pleased with Lady Byron. That trait which struck you of decidedness of character I have often observed, but I believe that while she lived with Lord B. she was most compliant to his will in everything excepting when she was required to mingle or become an associate of the profligate and debased, . . . but nothing would satisfy him but the grovelling devotedness of a Gulnare. She wrote to me a few short lines just after she had been to Abbotsford, and in it she told me of your kind reception of her. There seems to have been but one thing in the day she spent with you which she could have wished otherwise, viz., your having asked company to meet her, as she was in hopes to have found you *en famille*."

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